

Friday December 13 1996

Table of exchange rates for various countries including Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, etc.

The Guardian INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Printed in London, Manchester, Frankfurt and Roubaix

Friday Review

Resistance is futile. How Star Trek turned nasty

Something Wonderful: pick of the year's CDs and movies

With European

Covers story

Pages 6/13

Big rate rises on way says CBI

Sarah Ryle and Charlotte Denny

INDUSTRIALISTS last night warned that Britain is heading for a consumer boom that will fuel inflation unless checked by sharp increases in official interest rates.



Labour candidate Jeff Ennis and his wife, Margaret, confident of victory in Barnsley East yesterday. Snap election possible, page 6 PHOTOGRAPH: JUSTIN BLEE

Award chase hands Blair cock-up of the year

BBC catches Labour distorting leader's vote in personality poll

Andrew Gull Media Correspondent

A BUNGLED attempt by Labour's spin doctors to secure the Today Personality of the Year award for Tony Blair backfired disastrously last night.



Labour admitted a letter had been sent to about 300 party workers around the country by its audience participation unit at the party's Millbank media centre.

Listeners to the Radio 4 programme had been invited to nominate contenders for the award by letter, fax and e-mail. Jon Barton, the programme's new editor, decided to suspend voting in advance of the intended deadline at lunchtime today.

There's anything improper in that? But Mr Major said: "This is very sad. It is sad for Mr Blair that his staff engaged in mass manipulation of public opinion in an attempt to get a phoney result."

Falklands launch fairy-tale war as Big Friendly Giant turns on the charm



The peace offering... St Exupéry's The Little Prince

John Ezard

WAR of children's fairy stories has broken out between the Falkland Islands and Argentina. It was launched from Buenos Aires by the foreign minister Guido di Tella, author of a long-standing charm offensive aimed at the islanders.

St Exupéry's classic book The Little Prince. Its hero lives on a tiny planet but roams the universe seeking the gift of muzzles to stop sheep devouring his highly coveted pet rose.

Reaction has been less than grateful. One resident, Nicola Crowle, writes in a letter to this week's Penguin News: "Not only can we read well but we all learned the story of the Trojan horse as children."

"Eating human beans (beings) is wrong and evil", the BFG said. "It is gussy and glumptions", shouted the Bloodbottler Giant.



The riposte... Roald Dahl's The BFG (Big Friendly Giant)

Inside John Major won a vote of confidence from Britain's top...

World News Large numbers of...

Finance...

Sport...

Comment and Letters 8

International Publishing Dept Tel: (44) (0)171 239 9949

The Guardian advertisement with text: 'To our readers, Over recent weeks, we have been experiencing production problems which have seriously affected our distribution in some countries.'

Sketch

Gestures genuine and dissembling



Simon Hoggart

GRAND day for Majorisms. But first Harry Greenwood (C, Ealing N) made his big mistake. He asked the Prime Minister to promise he would never "dissemble" the British veto in Europe...

rest grows longer every time, including the "windfall tax", the "tartan tax" (raised by a Scottish assembly), the "teenage tax" (no child benefit for over-16s) and something called the London tax, which was new to me. He finished with a flourish: "Taxes and the Labour Party go together like strawberries and cream!"

First night

Dozing off at the power of dream

Michael Billington

A Midsummer Night's Dream The Almeida, London

WHERE, asks Jonathan Miller in a rather defensive programme note, is the magic? But it is not magic that one misses in this reductive, desperately underpowered production...

her great speech about natural disorder as if she were reporting on a rain-soaked fête to the WI, and Norman Rodway's Oberon coughs nervously and lights up when telling Puck that he knows a bank where the wild thyme blows...

Scottish outbreak second worst ever in world □ Cabinet committee aims to improve UK food hygiene

Poison crisis team set up

Alison Daniels and Ewen MacAskill

THE Government yesterday finally acknowledged the scale of the E. coli outbreak in Lanarkshire by setting up a cabinet committee to see what lessons can be learned for food hygiene throughout Britain.

The meeting came three weeks after the outbreak began and will be the third inquiry, with a fatal accident inquiry and an investigation by a leading Scottish academic, Professor Hugh Pennington, already under way.

After last night's meeting he said the committee had been set up "so that any lessons which are learned from the experience in Lanarkshire can be applied and implemented speedily across the UK as a whole. Bugs do not respect boundaries."

Mr Robertson said the credibility of any ministerial committee depended on Scottish Office ministers answering questions about their own handling of the epidemic, which they had failed to do so far.

Mr Robertson said the credibility of any ministerial committee depended on Scottish Office ministers answering questions about their own handling of the epidemic, which they had failed to do so far.

However, the Scottish Office issued a further warning to local authorities to re-examine outlets supplied by the Wishaw butcher John Barr & Son, whose shop is at the centre of the outbreak.



A welcome handshake across the desk of German finance minister Theo Waigel at the start of the European finance ministers meeting in Dublin

Germans dig in over currency policing

John Palmer in Dublin and Michael White in London

GERMANY last night dug in its heels to insist on tough rules for policing the European single currency as EU leaders gathered for their Dublin meeting to review progress on closer integration.

After Kenneth Clarke withdrew Treasury objections to spending £200 million on culling older cattle at risk from BSE, the road was opened for agriculture ministers to resume the cull, designed to restore consumer confidence.

Regardless of the outcome of the European Monetary Institute — forerunner of the planned European Central Bank — will today unveil examples of new Euro notes in simultaneous ceremonies in Dublin and Frankfurt.

The British retreat over the BSE cull came as John Major told MPs at Westminster it would be "unacceptable" if Britain gave up its national veto on EU policy-making.

At the heart of the dispute which pits Germany and Holland against the Commission and all the other EU governments, are the circumstances which might allow budget disciplines to be relaxed for a single currency country facing serious economic difficulties.

"verifiable definitions" for any exceptions to this rule. "I will not move away from the clear stability goal," he said.

Channel 4 to spend a night on sport

Round-the-clock station to host first fans' forum on TV. Nick Varley reports

CHANNEL 4 is to introduce all-night sports programming in the new year in its switch to 24-hour television.

editor of Total Sports magazine, it will feature phone-ins from fans. Guests will discuss sporting topics, followed by full matches from the climax of the American football season and, more regularly, basketball, also from the US.

One possible stumbling block for Under The Moon, the mainstay of the night, will be lack of access to top flight action.

That's what everyone else does. Of course, if there is a major sport story on the night — a disaster or a resignation — we will be able just to go off on that."

Willets to get £8,000 pay-off

continued from page 1 Mr Greer. In the memo he tried to smother a parliamentary inquiry being set up to investigate the matter by Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, then chairman of the now defunct members' interest committee.

family Christmas and then in the new year I will be an active backbencher. I will think and take stock."

Advertisement for GRRR AHA MMM'S PORT featuring a hand holding a glass and the text 'Just roll it round your tongue. GRAHAM'S THE PORT OF AUTHORITY'.

This year's list of the world's most powerful film directors features several unfamiliar names, but Tom Hanks still leads the stars. Dan Glaister reports



TOP DIRECTOR: ROLAND EMMERICH

Box office: \$702 million (Independence Day)
Next film:

Godzilla
Films: Independence Day, Universal

Soldier
What they say: "Probably the hottest

director in the world" — Screen International

Cut! How directors make silver screen gold

MARTIN Scorsese isn't on the list, nor is Mal Gibson, whose Braveheart won him this year's Oscar for best director. There's no room for Oliver Stone or critics' darlings the Coen brothers, and as for Quentin Tarantino, forget it. Instead, the latest ranking of the world's most powerful film directors, published by the trade magazine Screen International, features such unfamiliar names as Roland Emmerich, Jan de Bont, Tom Shadyac and Joe Johnston. Roland Emmerich? His blockbuster hit Independence Day has taken \$702 million (£470 million) worldwide, becoming one of only six films with gross US box office takings of more than \$300 million. Jan de Bont brought the world the special effects epic Twister, while Joe Johnston directed the Robin Williams children's film Jumanji. Tom Shadyac directed the Eddie Murphy film The Nutty Professor, which has taken \$12 million in the UK alone. Once again the auteurs have lost out to the hired hands. The only familiar name is Brian De Palma, at number three for Mission Impossible, produced by and starring Tom Cruise. "There are a lot of commercial directors who have been hired to do big blockbuster movies," said Screen International's features editor Mike Goodridge. "It is a big turnaround for De Palma because he was considered poison after Bonfire of the Vanities." For the top actors, the ques-



TOP ACTOR: TOM HANKS

Box office (last three films): Forrest Gump \$678 million; Apollo 13 \$334 million; Philadelphia \$201 million
What they say: "People relate to me as a regular guy" — Tom Hanks

What they say: "Probably the hottest



TOP STUDIO: THE WALT DISNEY CO

Box office: \$1,007,221,152 million (including 101 Dalmatians, above)
Films: Fantasia, Pocahontas
What they say: "I love Mickey Mouse more than any woman I've ever known" — Walt Disney

Disney president 'set to quit'

MARK TRAN in New York
MICHAEL OVITZ, once Hollywood's top talent scout, is on the verge of quitting Disney's Magic Kingdom only a year after his surprise appointment as president of the entertainment giant. Disney yesterday maintained a stony silence about reports widespread in the United States that an "extremely unhappy" Mr Ovitz is about to leave the firm after clashes with the chairman, Michael Eisner. Speculation has been fuelled by sightings of Mr Ovitz at the New York headquarters of the entertainment company Viacom, which owns Paramount film studio and Block-



President Michael Ovitz (left) and chairman Michael Eisner

buster video-rental stores, and by reports that he has held discussions with Sony. But a Sony official, Peter Wilkes, said yesterday: "There are no plans to hire Mr Ovitz for a position at Sony. These reports have no basis in fact." It is still unclear whether Mr Ovitz will leave Disney, and the reports could be

Opening of IRA killing offensive thwarted

David Sherrock, Ireland Correspondent

THE IRA has embarked on a new killing offensive directed against the security forces, it was confirmed yesterday when police thwarted a mortar attack in north Belfast. Fears that the IRA is to mount its first Christmas campaign for three years in Northern Ireland rose last night after a series of alerts and warnings. An IRA Mk16 mortar packed with Semtex was found in an alleyway in north Belfast yesterday. Three similar mortars were found in a house in Republican west Belfast last week. Two weeks ago 250lbs of explosives were made safe half a mile from Drumaderry barracks in Portadown, Co Armagh. The Mk16 mortar was set up in a wheeled bin pointing out onto the street, ready to hit a Land-Rover leaving the nearby Girdwood army barracks in the city's Antrim Road area, the RUC said. It had been lodged in sand with the end protruding out of a hole in the side of the bin. It is thought that the IRA abandoned the planned attack after a tip-off to police. Security sources revealed that a battery pack needed to detonate the device was missing when they found the mortar at the back of a house close to the one of Belfast's largest military sites. A bogus call was made to police in an attempt to lure them into the area. It is believed the IRA members waiting to launch the ambush

made a run for it once a second call warning police from responding. Supt Stephen White said the mortar would have been aimed at the side of passing patrol vehicles. It would have exploded inside the vehicle or ripped straight through and into houses. Several families had to stay away from their homes all night because of the alert. At one stage part of the Antrim Road was sealed off. The discovery of the mortar appears to confirm fears that the Provisionals are determined to demonstrate their killing capacity in the run-up to Christmas and have written off the peace process until after a general election. Security sources say the Provisionals are involved in a sustained campaign of targeting individual officers and VIPs. In Dublin the Labour leader Tony Blair rejected an accusation that he was being disloyal to his Church of England faith by having a Catholic wife. Mr Blair, who met the Irish President Mary Robinson before today's tour of Northern Ireland, said he was "not treating too seriously" the claim by Ulster's Orange Order grand master Robert Saulters. Mr Blair said: "I married my wife because I love her. I think these religious differences, whether you are a Catholic or a Protestant, don't actually matter. What is important is how people are trying to work hard for peace." Mr Blair will also meet the Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble and the SDLP deputy leader Seamus Mallon.

Mentally ill killer may make claim

David Brindle, Social Services Correspondent

A CLAIM for damages by Christopher Clunis, the mentally ill man who killed a stranger on the London Underground, is to go ahead after a judge yesterday rejected a health authority's attempt to block it. The ruling was welcomed by the victim's widow, Jayne Zito, because success for Mr Clunis would mean that he, in turn, could pay damages. Mr Clunis, a schizophrenic, stabbed to death Jonathan Zito at Finsbury Park tube station in north London in 1992. He is claiming damages for negligence on the part of Camden and Islington health authority in leaving him in the community when he was seriously ill. The authority includes the former Hampstead authority which ran the now-closed Friern Barnet hospital, where doctors had responsibility for Mr Clunis as an out-patient. Camden and Islington yesterday asked the High Court to throw out the action by 33-year-old Mr Clunis, who is detained indefinitely at Rampton top security hospital, Nottinghamshire, on grounds that he was seeking to benefit from an unlawful act. However, Deputy Judge Richard Mawrey, QC, said the authority accepted it did have a duty of care to Mr Clunis — a duty he claimed had been breached — and it was established in law that a health authority was liable when a mental patient harmed himself.



Christopher Clunis... will in turn be able to compensate

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# Police alert elderly after sex killing

Martyn Halsall

**P**OLICE investigating the fatal stabbing of a widow aged 74 in a sex attack at her home have warned elderly people in an affluent area of Merseyside to be on their guard.

Police said Alice Rye, a regular churchgoer involved in the Women's Institute, had been stabbed through the heart. She was found by neighbours on Wednesday morning with her hands tied with blue rope and her clothing raised above her waist.

Detective Superintendent Geoff Harrison, leading a team of 70 detectives in the murder hunt, said yesterday: "It was a very nasty murder, and it was probably sexually motivated. She suffered vicious wounds."

"The house was not ransacked and there was no forced entry, so the caller probably knocked on the door. We ask people to be very vigilant. We don't know what we are dealing with."

Police, who were still searching for the murder weapon last night, believe Mrs Rye was killed at about 4.30pm on Tuesday, about five hours after she was seen in shops in Spital on the Wirral.

Her killer is believed to

have tricked his way into her home. "We are asking for information from anybody who has had suspicious callers to their home, or anyone who saw anybody acting suspiciously to come forward," said Det Supt Harrison.

Mrs Rye, described as active and well liked, had lived in Spital for almost 40 years. She had lived alone since the death of her husband John, a director of a firm of West African commodity traders, 10 years ago. Davina, one of her three children, is a former dancer with the Royal Ballet.

Her neighbour, Geoffrey Howarth, aged 68, who discovered her body, said detectives had asked him not to disclose details. He had last seen her on Monday when they exchanged Christmas cards.

Mrs Rye's card contained £10 for his disabled daughter. "She was always caring," said Mr Howarth. "How could anyone commit such a crime on such an innocent person?"

He said someone called in on her every day. Another neighbour raised the alarm when there was no reply.

The Rev Justin Mole, vicar of Mrs Rye's church, said: "She was a lady of poise, dignity and elegance. This is a quiet suburban and safe area which has clearly been intruded on by evil."

# Spine surgeon answers back

Peter Hetherington

**A** SURGEON who suggested delaying spinal surgery for heavy smokers and overweight patients until their lifestyles improved last night defended his views in the face of criticism from back pain campaigners and an MP.

Manoj Krishna, an orthopaedic specialist at North Tessa general hospital in Stockton, Cleveland, called for radical measures to tackle the growing problem of back complaints, which affect a third of adults.

In a circular to local GPs, he suggests that smokers and obese or depressed people should first be offered counselling before surgery is contemplated. Yesterday he cited as an example young people on benefits who had no intention of working again.

Implying that some spinal complaints could be worsened by "psycho-social stress", he writes that some GPs are compounding difficulties by telling patients to rest, when they could be cured by a more active lifestyle.

Mr Krishna believes a new, structured approach could save the country tens of millions of pounds. On the most

recent estimate, he calculates there has been a 208 per cent increase in sickness and invalidity benefit for back pain since the late 1970s.

"People who are depressed, grossly overweight and who smoke will do less well from surgery than people who do not have these factors," he said last night. Psychological distress should ideally be tackled before surgery.

Mr Krishna strongly denied calling for the prioritising or rationing of health care in this sector, but said something needed to be done.

With a co-ordinated drive involving psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and surgeons, he says back pain and disability could be reduced — cutting the near £500 million annual cost to the NHS while saving on invalidity benefit.

But the MP for nearby Darlington, Alan Milburn, said Mr Krishna appeared to be calling for rationing of care.

"The NHS has to operate on clinical need, not on the basis of arbitrary criteria, otherwise it becomes a national lottery," he said.

The National Back Pain Association said it was a mistake for consultants to become involved in psychological matters.



The Spice Girls, whose seasonal message is that although the Prime Minister is a "boring pillock" he is better than his rivals. PHOTOGRAPH: RAY BURKSTON

# Meet John Major's last hope

Luke Harding

**H**E MAY be a "boring pillock", he may have just lost his Paymaster General. But for John Major, starting into the abyss of electoral defeat, there was a glimmer of hope yesterday.

The beleaguered Prime Minister won an unlikely endorsement from Britain's top all-girl pop group — the Spice Girls.

In an interview with the Spectator, the girls reveal that they would "never vote Labour".

"His hair's all right but we don't agree with his tax policies. He's just not a safe pair of hands for the economy," Geri, aged 24, said of Tony Blair. And what about the Prime Minister? "As for

**'We Spice Girls are true Thatcherites. Thatcher was the first Spice Girl, the pioneer of our ideology — Girl Power'**

blown his chance of being prime minister. Last year he turned down the opportunity to appear in a Spice Girls video. Their single Wannabe went on to sell 3 million copies. Now at number one in 27 countries it is, as the magazine points out, an "anthem to Thatcherite meritocratic aspiration".

The Labour leader does have something in common with the five-girl ensemble — they are both admirers of Lady Thatcher.

In the interview, carried out at the Smash Hits awards ceremony two weeks ago, the girls reveal that they are deeply Euro-sceptical. And what about Lady Thatcher (or Maggie Spice, as she should perhaps now be called)?

"We Spice Girls are true Thatcherites. Thatcher was the first Spice Girl, the

**'In the olden days a politician could be a coalminer who came to power with ideals. Not Blair. He's just a good marketing man. No ideals'**

single. 2 Become 1, has already sold 675,000 copies before its official release on Monday.

It seems destined to go to number one.

The Spice Girls, who have met Mr Blair, describe him as "nice enough" and "really charming".

"But the real problem with Blair," said Geri, "is that he's never had a real job. In the olden days a politician could be a coalminer who came to power with ideals. Not Blair. He's just a good marketing man. No ideals."

Meanwhile, Victoria, known as "Posh Spice" because she once went to ballet school, dismisses the idea of a federal Europe as "ridiculous".

"We are patriotic," she added. "The single currency is an outrage. We want the

Queen's head — or the king's head if we have a king — on our own coins."

Geri, it also emerges, has political ambitions of her own. "There is Nick Scott's vacancy. I am considering whether to throw my spice into the ring and stand. If the people want me, I could not refuse. I'd be like Glenda Jackson, but better," she said.

However, Mr Blair shrugged off the criticism and revealed himself to be a Spice Girls fan. "Just because the Spice Girls like Mrs Thatcher won't stop Tony Blair liking their music," his office declared.

Meanwhile, the girls were oblivious to all the fuss. They spent yesterday filming a Christmas edition of Top of the Pops and could not be contacted.

## Tory



Phil Collins  
The Spice Girls, Gary Numan, Phil Collins, Stock and Aitken, Tony Mortimer of East 17, Paul Weller (in the 70s)

## Labour



M-People  
Oasis, Boo Radleys, M-People, Damon Albarn, Radiohead, D:Ream, Menswear, Teenage Fanclub, Mick Hucknall, The Divine Comedy, Sting

# Stone Age meets Homo erectus

Tim Radford  
Science Editor

**S**TONE Age men and women may have met their own distant ancestors. About 30,000 years ago, while cave-painting, tool-using, Homo sapiens were crossing Asia on the way to Australia, they may have encountered Homo erectus.

The evidence of a brief encounter has just emerged from a careful dating of two sites in Java. The study, published today in the US journal Science, shows that while the evidence of a brief encounter has just emerged from a careful dating of two sites in Java. The study, published today in the US journal Science, shows that while

Carl Swisher, of the University of California, Berkeley, and colleagues in North America and Indonesia took another look at a puzzling set of fossils once known as "Java man".

Bits of bone and skull were found on a terrace by the Solo River in central Java, along with a lot of fragments of animals, and it looked as though the lot had been swept up somewhere else and dumped there by river flooding. But the fragments were not worn, so they couldn't have come from very far away.

The Homo erectus bones could not be dated, but the researchers managed to date cattle teeth found with them. They came up with an age of 37,000 to 53,000 years. They obtained the same pattern

from two sites, which helped confirm their suspicions: that the fossils were up to 400,000 years younger than earlier estimates.

"Homo erectus may have survived on Java at least 250,000 years longer than on the Asian mainland, and perhaps 1 million years longer than in Africa," Dr Swisher said.

"The new ages raise the possibility that Homo erectus overlapped in time with anatomically modern humans in south-east Asia."

There are still questions about the date. But it looks good for the "out of Africa" hypothesis: that modern humans are all descended from one small group of proto-humans in Africa, and that all other Homo erectus successors — Neanderthal man and

so on — were false starts. "I take the dates seriously," said Chris Stringer, of the Natural History Museum, and co-author of a new paperback Africa Exodus.

"They suggest, if they are right, that astonishingly Homo erectus was still around hundreds of thousands of years after most people thought he had died out. What we seem to have now is a parallel with the situation in Europe, where the Neanderthals were hanging on in the north-west corner of the inhabited world, and Homo erectus hanging on in the south-east corner, and in between, I would say, we have got dispersing modern people, essentially like us, who are going to take over from these relict populations."

# Man held after Leah's death denied supplying ecstasy

**D**ETECTIVES questioned a man said to have been the drug dealer who supplied the ecstasy tablet which killed Leah Betts, Norwich crown court was told yesterday.

Detective Sergeant Derek Nickol said Mark Murray was arrested and interviewed following Leah's death in November last year. No drugs were found at his home and police could not gather enough evidence to connect him with supplying drugs in relation to the death.

Mr Murray had previous convictions for drug offences, the court heard, and he was a known drugs dealer.

The court has heard that the ecstasy tablet which killed Leah was bought at Raquel's nightclub in Basildon, Essex.

Yesterday, Patrick O'Mahoney, the club's head doorman at the time of the death, told the court that the dealer who had supplied the fatal ecstasy tablet was Mr Murray.

Mr Nickol said that in the early stages of the Leah inquiry there was information

which led police to suspect that Mr O'Mahoney might also have been involved in drug dealing at Raquel's. But he said further inquiries failed to reveal any evidence of that and no charges were ever brought.

"Mark Murray was interviewed in the course of this inquiry," Mr Nickol told the court. "We obviously had sufficient intelligence to obtain a search warrant to search his house and arrest him. No drugs were found in his house and he was subsequently not charged."

Leah died after collapsing into a coma while celebrating her 18th birthday at her parents' home in Latchingdon, Essex.

Steven Packman, aged 18, of Laindon, Essex, denies being concerned with the supply of ecstasy to Leah. Stephen Smith, 19, of Basildon, Essex, has admitted a similar charge. Leah's friend Sarah Cargill, aged 18, of Basildon, Essex, and Louise Yexley, 18, of Basildon, Essex, were both cautioned after admitting a similar charge.

# Average rise in direct tax next year 'will be £109'

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

**T**REASURY figures reveal that the average family will pay £109 a year more in direct tax next year than at the 1992 general election, according to Labour.

The figures appear to be much worse than the £50 a year for the average family admitted to by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, William Waldegrave, after the Budget.

The Treasury described Labour's interpretation of its figures as selective. "The more one earns, the more you pay in tax," a spokesman said.

# Labour attacks grants to 'deprived' Westminster

Michael White  
Political Editor

**T**HE Environment Secretary, John Gummer, has refused to revise spending decisions that have given millions of pounds in grants to Westminster, the Tory flagship local authority in central London, on the grounds that it is Britain's fourth most deprived council.

As Labour published a dossier to challenge the council's reputation for efficiency as well as financial prudence, the Department of the Environment confirmed that local authority bodies had tried and failed to get the rules changed.

Westminster spends £55 a head on refuse collection and disposal — the highest level in the country and more than double that of Camden, its Labour-controlled neighbour, the shadow environment secretary, Frank Dobson, said yesterday. On street cleaning it came second only to Kensington and Chelsea, at £36.42 a head.

But, to Labour fury, its council tax is kept low by "sweetheart" deals with Conservative ministers. "Everything is geared to feather-bedding the Tories in Westminster so they can keep their council tax down," said Mr Dobson. He challenged out-of-London Tory MPs to vote down this year's grant

package, which will cost their constituents money.

At the heart of Labour's attack are two elements in the grant calculation carried out under ministerial direction from Whitehall departments that are within the borough.

One is the allowance for "visitors" to the borough, a mixture of commuters and overnight tourists. Westminster gets an extra £24.6 million a year on the assumption that a proportion of them are deprived, including, Mr Dobson said, "12 per cent of the overnight visitors at the Ritz or Hilton hotels". The other is disallowance of the £20 million a year which the council gets from cars parked at pre-mile prices.

# No PIN, just press the flesh

Vivek Chaudhary

**S**CIENTISTS in America are reported to be developing a system for passing on data through a handshake, which could eventually make PIN numbers obsolete.

The system, a Personal Area Network (PAN), consists of a computer chip, a tiny transmitter and a receiver to fit on a belt or go in a pocket. The chip holds personal details, and when the wearer

comes into contact with somebody else wearing a PAN, the transmitter sends a small current around the body, creating an electrical field which carries data.

The device, expected to cost around £15, was developed from collaboration between IBM and American magicians Penn and Teller, who had been seeking ways of generating minor electrical fields around the body to create the illusion of playing a keyboard without touching it.

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# Rifkind bid to deflect fears on EU

## Commons debate

Michael White  
Political Editor

**B**RITAIN and its European Union partners face neither a stark choice between federalism and a limited free trade area, nor early decisions on joining the proposed single currency, Malcolm Rifkind told MPs last night.

As the Commons concluded its turbulent two-day debate ahead of this weekend's Dublin summit, the Foreign Secretary struggled against the outspoken doubts of backbench sceptics on both sides to tread a cautious path between what he called "two equally Manichaean" choices.

But Whitehall sources are preparing Eurosceptics for disappointment in the review of alleged EU "fudging" of the Maastricht criteria for single currency membership.

Labour's Robin Cook yesterday joined warnings against "grotesque fudging" of financial tests of economic health now being tackled by EU governments ahead of the 1998/99 timetable. And he claimed anti-Europeanism would not be the electoral lifebelt some believe.

But the Treasury "fudge" study sceptics hoped would allow British membership to be ruled out, "will not reach conclusions or make recommendations," ministers say.

Like the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, who opened the debate on Wednesday, Mr Rifkind tried to deflect backbench Tory wrath against Labour. He accused it of "naivety and inexperience" which had revealed the negotiating hand Tony Blair and Mr Cook would take to next summer's Amsterdam summit if they win the election.

"They have revealed to every European government that the British budget rebate, the Schengen opt-out to protect our frontiers and the Maastricht single currency opt-out are just temporary aberrations to be abandoned by a Labour government in due course," he said.

But the Foreign Secretary faced attacks, not only from Mr Cook, his Labour shadow, but from John Redwood and other rightwing Tories who fear ministers are still on a

slippery slope towards surrendering sovereignty. Mr Rifkind told MPs the Government is "unshakable" and will not budge "one inch" in the face of EU proposals for relaxed border controls. He also repudiated EU Commission president Jacques Santer's warning last week that Britain is approaching the "hour of truth", and must decide if it wanted Europe as a free trade area or a political union.

Mr Rifkind said this was a false choice, "because reality lies between such poles."

"If Europe is more than a free trade area it is also less than a federal state," Mr Rifkind said, reaffirming government determination to exempt Britain from the 48-hour working week and to combat fisheries quota-hopping.

He got a better response from his backbenchers than did Mr Clarke, the sceptics' *bête noire*. "If there is an hour of truth approaching, it is perhaps for the integrationists in Europe, who need to define the limits of their ambition," he said.

When Tory Eurosceptic Bill Cash pressed him on the "fundamental inconsistency" between his view of a single currency and that of the Chancellor — who said he had no objection to the euro in principle — Mr Rifkind obliquely confirmed it. He had "no doubt ... the question of a single currency and the possible abolition of our own national currency would be a great historic decision," he said, echoing Mr Major.

Mr Cook told him: "The fault-line in the chamber doesn't run along the table between us. It runs along the bench behind you and your own backbenches."

He also mocked the Government's unsuccessful efforts to get the EU's ban on British beef lifted, claiming this showed "how poor they are at doing business with Europe."

He added: "Standing on the sidelines, shouting through a megaphone how much you disagree with everyone else, isn't a posture of strength. It exposes how weak your bargaining position actually is."

Mr Cook claimed the Government was aiming to use the same tactics at the Dublin summit, and chided ministers for planning to object to new powers for consumer protection and to tackle discrimination against the disabled.

Why we need Europe, page 3



An African 'squeegee merchant' in Milan who took advantage of lax Italian immigration laws. PHOTOGRAPH: MARCO PESAPESI

# Italy's outcrop offers open door to illegals

John Hooper on how an island in the Med may prompt angry discussion in Dublin

**R**ISING from the Mediterranean between Malta and Tunisia, Lampedusa, a pineapple-shaped island of windswept limestone dotted with palms, belongs naturally to Africa. But politically, it is in Europe — a distant outcrop of the Italian state — and it is that which has tempted a growing number of north Africans to knock at this far-flung back door to the European Union.

Warrant officer Francesco Melis, commander of the island's revenue guard, reckons that this year some 3,500 people have landed from Tunisian fishing boats. Last week saw the cheekiest attempt yet when a boat loaded with would-be EU residents tied up in the island's main harbour and began disembarking its human cargo.

"Just as if it were a regular ferry service," Mr Melis recalled with a smile. Comic though it was, the incident illustrates a point that could prompt angry debate at the Dublin summit, since Italy's immigration laws are so lax that most uninvited arrivals on Lampedusa want to get caught.

Since the expiry last month of a decree which stiffened the provisions of a 1990 law, it is no longer an offence to try to enter, just to try to smuggle people ashore. The immigrants themselves are merely served with what Mr Melis termed "a sort of invitation

to leave Italy within 15 days". Indeed many do — by heading for Germany or, like most Maghrebis, France. Police on Lampedusa say many arrivals are Algerians fleeing the civil war, and some have been treated for open wounds. But they believe others are Islamic militants on their way to Europe for reasons of their own.

What makes sense of a landing here is that, for administrative reasons, immigrants can only be served with expulsion orders on Sicily. So the first stage of the onward journey is paid for by the Italian taxpayer.

"What is happening on Lampedusa is what happens in a country which fails to equip itself with proper immigration laws," said Salvatore Martello, the island's mayor.

Since this autumn, though, reinforcements have been deployed on the island, including three revenue guard patrol boats. But there is no point their patrolling the coastline, since everyone detained in territorial waters has to be sent to where they want to go.

On board the 27-metre Galiano, Lt Italo Spalvieri, who co-ordinates the revenue guards' seaborne contribution, said: "Our best results have come from turning back vessels beyond the 12-mile limit."

On the night of October 26, the Galiano helped intercept four craft carrying 57 would-be entrants. A message through diplomatic channels brought a Tunisian warship whose crew boarded the vessels and emptied them of their would-be illegal immigrants.

# Obstacles on the road towards political union

John Palmer on the hard choices facing the British government at the Dublin summit on the draft EU treaty

**T**HE central question facing the European Union summit which begins in Dublin's historic castle today is whether and how to match a move to monetary union with new steps towards political union.

The focus of debate will be a draft European Union treaty which foresees a major role for the EU over immigration and the fight against international crime, as well as more majority voting in EU decisions and other changes bitterly resisted by the British government.

The other 14 EU member states disagree among themselves on details of any new treaty, but only Britain opposes the goal of closer union, lock, stock and barrel.

From John Major's point of view, the principal five sections of the proposed, greater are highly controversial. But since the Dublin summit will not be asked to make any final decisions, the Prime Minister will endorse the draft treaty — but only as a progress report on the wider inter-governmental negotiations on EU integration, the Maastricht Treaty review conference.

He will reserve his right to veto most of its contents later. Borders, human rights and crime. The first aim of the treaty is to create "an area of freedom, security and justice". This includes relatively non-contentious provisions for fundamental human rights, greater police co-operation and non-discrimination as well as highly controversial proposals to transfer to the EU responsibility for the fight against international crime, corruption, drug trafficking and abuse against children.

The document hints at the possible incorporation into the EU treaty of the Schengen agreement, which abolishes border controls between some European states.

If an eventual treaty incorporates abolition of internal frontiers, Britain is expected to insist on opting out to retain its own purely national border controls.

Most EU governments want to see a bigger role for the EU in immigration and asylum policy and the fight against crime. However, Denmark shares British reservations about a transfer of decision-making in these areas that would directly involve the European Commission and the European Court of Justice, and would almost certainly lead to greater majority voting.

Jobs and social policy. The treaty seeks to incorporate the aim of "a high level of employment" for the people of the EU.

London objects, arguing that this could be cover for all manner of EU economic interventionism and the extension of social policies that would work against the need to make Europe more globally competitive.

Well nigh unanimously, other EU governments believe that Europe will not become competitive through sweatshop social conditions. They also want to strengthen EU environment standards and the interests of consumers.

Everyone will sign up to declarations on "subsidiarity" — taking decisions as close to the citizens as possible — and "openness" — end-

ing secrecy in the Council of Ministers.

Foreign and defence policy. Everyone wants to strengthen the EU's often confused and fragile "common foreign and security policy". France has given up the idea of putting EU foreign policy in charge of a high-flying international politician. Responsibility for foreign policy initiatives will in future lie with a new Brussels-based unit (linking the Council of Ministers and the commission) rather than national capitals.

Chancellor Kohl of Germany and President Chirac of France believe the goal of a common European defence agreed at Maastricht should convert now into a phased integration of the Western European Union — Europe's putative defence arm — into the EU.

Neutral Austria and Sweden insist this should not lead to an outright security guarantee of the defence of any member state which is attacked. Britain also wants to keep the WEU well away from direct control by the EU.

Institutional reform. The draft treaty sidesteps direct proposals on changing how EU institutions operate, insisting this should be left to the Dutch presidency which hopes to finalise the new EU treaty next year.

But — with the exception of Britain — there is consensus that majority voting must become the rule rather than the exception as the EU expands.

On other reform issues there are divisions between the larger and smaller countries over moves to redistribute the votes cast by each state in the Council of Ministers to better reflect different

population sizes. Apart from Britain, everyone agrees that the Court of Justice should be strengthened.

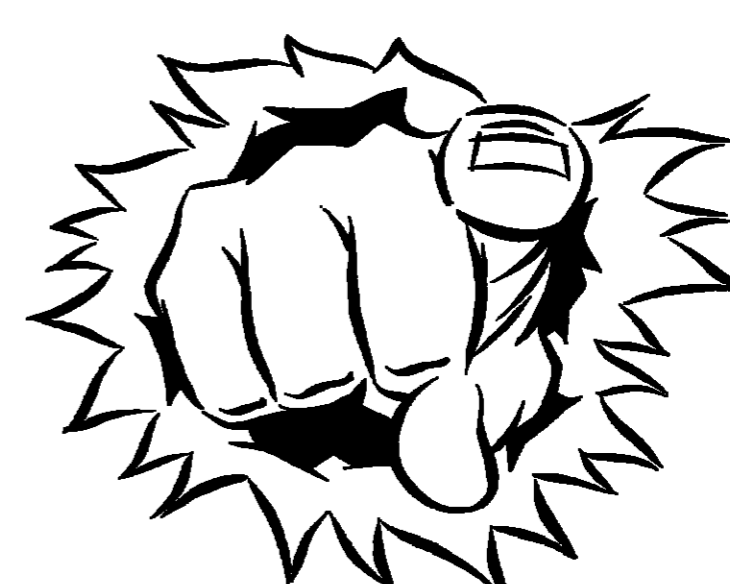
'Flexibility'. This is perhaps the most explosive of all the issues to be resolved in a new treaty. By flexibility, proponents mean they want to be free to co-operate more closely with each other, without such moves being blocked by a veto from any state refusing to take part.

Objectors fear this may encourage the emergence of a "union within the union". France, Germany and others are in favour. Britain is happy for the others to co-operate more closely among themselves, provided it has the right to approve what the others do, even where the UK is not participating. Spain, Italy and the Nordic countries regard the idea nervously.



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Some of the first German troops to march into Czechoslovakia in 1938. Right: A motor-cycle patrol arrives in Bohemian to be warmly greeted by the Sudeten people



## Kohl tries to heal Czechs' old sores

Ian Traynor in Bonn

**C**HANCELLOR Helmut Kohl goes to Prague next month hoping to close the book on one of the last international grievances stemming from the second world war by signing a declaration of reconciliation with the Czechs.

After two years of often bitter negotiations, during which every comma and adjective has been endlessly examined, Germany and the Czech republic have agreed a formula to lay to rest their legacy of recrimination and intransigence dating from the war.

For the first time Germany formally admits that it was to blame for the Nazi occupation and partition of Czechoslovakia in 1938. The Czechs apologise for the deportation of two million ethnic Germans in 1945-46.

The agreement has enraged the influential Bavarian lobby of Sudeten Germans: ethnic Germans who inhabited Bohemia for centuries, many of whom welcomed the Nazi takeover. They were expelled with allied blessing at the end of the war.

Czech nationalists too are angry, complaining that Prague's apology means the Czechs have been forced to bow before their mighty neighbour.

The German and Czech foreign ministers are to initial the agreed text next week before Mr Kohl and the Czech prime minister, Vaclav Klaus, sign the document in January.

Although the Czechs go further than before in regretting "the excesses" that accompanied the post-war expulsions, the agreement is on balance a victory for Prague and a defeat for the Sudeten German lobby, who insisted that the expulsions should be recognised as a crime. That would have opened the way for compensation claims.

They hoped to invalidate post-war decrees in Prague and the allies' Potsdam declaration which approved the deportations so that they could reclaim property and establish resettlement rights. This week they denounced the agreement as a historical lie.

The Czechs and Slovenes, two small post-communist countries struggling to build democracies, felt they were being blackmailed by the successor states to the two key axis powers.

On both compensation and on the broader foreign policy front of Czech hopes to be integrated into Western organisations, Prague is the net winner.

The agreement rules out "political and juridical problems deriving from the past" and Bonn affirms its support for Czech entry to the EU and Nato.

## French diplomatic intransigence makes waves across the Atlantic

Public bickering over the UN and Nato is only the latest episode in a transatlantic soap opera of mutual loathing, writes **Ian Black**

**L**ONG-SIMMERING transatlantic resentment of France's assertive foreign policy is coming to the boil as President Jacques Chirac stands his ground in confrontations with Washington over the United Nations and Nato.

The public bickering grew louder yesterday after reports that France's foreign minister, Hervé de Charette, walked out during a toast to the US secretary of state, Warren Christopher, at this week's Nato meeting in Brussels.

A US official accused Mr Charette of "an incredible display of petulant behaviour", but France and Nato denied that Mr Christopher had been snubbed.

The denials were treated with scepticism in diplomatic circles and, whatever the truth, the incident seemed to reflect the gloomy state of Franco-American relations.

It caused ripples for British officials too, who are worried that months of disagreements over the Middle East, Africa and now the UN and Nato may grow worse.

France is the only one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council blocking the selection of the Ghanaian diplomat Kofi Annan as the next UN secretary-general. He is backed by Britain and the US.

In informal polling yesterday France found itself more isolated than ever — it alone among the 15 Security Council members opposed him.

Mr Chirac has insisted that he will support only a francophone African candidate, apparently out of pique at the US veto of Boutros Boutros-Ghali, whom France backed in 1991. Washington and London are refusing to back down.

"We are getting worried about the sharpness of some of these US-French disputes," a senior Foreign Office official said. "They seem to be taking on a life of their own. They're going beyond substance. And that's the problem with Annan — after all, he does speak French."

Diplomats quashed speculation that France might reconsider Mr Annan if the US agreed to give Paris Nato's southern command in Naples, which controls the Mediterranean. Washington said its position was not negotiable.

In any case, the Nato job does not need to be settled until the summer, Mr Boutros-Ghali needs replacing by the end of the month.

The Americans accuse Mr Chirac of extreme Gaullism and say he has failed to repay President Clinton's efforts to build a closer personal relationship with the Elysee.

"We really stroked the French but, if we thought this was going to make them pliable on Nato or other issues where they feel their sovereignty is at stake, that and 25 cents got us a cup of coffee," said one well-placed source.

British officials are more philosophical, sympathising with a similar-minded former colonial power and nuclear state which likes to "punch above its weight".

But London has been annoyed by Mr Chirac, who it believes is playing to the gallery on the Arab-Israeli peace process and Iraq, and now over Mr Annan's appointment.

Whitehall hopes that France will back down in the UN and is warning Paris that it risks scoring an own goal by making it impossible to find an acceptable francophone African secretary-general.

Despite differences on European monetary union and anger about mad cow disease, London and Paris remain close on a wide range of European Union issues, from defence (they co-operate in Bosnia) through their visions of the European Commission to the role of the European Parliament.

Further afield, two years of crisis in Rwanda have trained an unwelcome spotlight on France's role in central Africa.

France and the US have clashed most bitterly when one is seen as "trespassing" on the other's traditional sphere of influence: this caused the row when Mr Charette launched his Middle East initiative in competition with Washington's efforts.

Cynics say such posturing is intended to advance France's commercial interests. A former senior British official observed: "For them the pirouette is valuable — even if the exports matter more."

## Bernadette's bitter song of drudgery to riches goes on national concert tour

Paul Webster in Paris

**S**OME day Hollywood may get round to making the film of Bernadette Goeyry's magical transformation from charlady to concert star at the age of 60.

Bernadette, the Nightingale of Verdun, is about to fulfil a lifetime fantasy as outrageous as Cinderella or Pretty Woman, by setting out on a national concert tour to sing a specially-written oratorio backed by a 100-member symphony orchestra.

Her fairy godmother was the prosaic Lolo, similar to the British national lottery, which made three wishes come true by handing her a cheque for \$4.5 million in 1990. The first wish was to break out of a lifetime's drudgery and abuse.

The second was to find her singing lessons and the third was to take revenge on her dead mother.

### World news in brief

## Police turn away Serb demonstrators

ARMED riot police turned away a student-led demonstration in Belgrade yesterday as it tried to march on the home of the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic.

## Former hostage arrested

A TURKISH soldier was arrested yesterday for joining Kurdish rebels who had held him hostage. Ibrahim Yaya, who was released by the rebels earlier this week, spoke in complimentary terms about his captors on the Kurdish-language MED TV channel, which is banned in Turkey for being a tool of the rebel Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Mr Yaya and five others had been held hostage by the PKK in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq for 18 months. — *Reuters, Diyarbakir.*

## Jail for drug cocktail robber

A MAN who gave drugged drinks to train passengers before robbing them in attacks that led to the deaths of two people was sentenced to 15 years in prison in Poland yesterday.

## Japanese find nerve gas

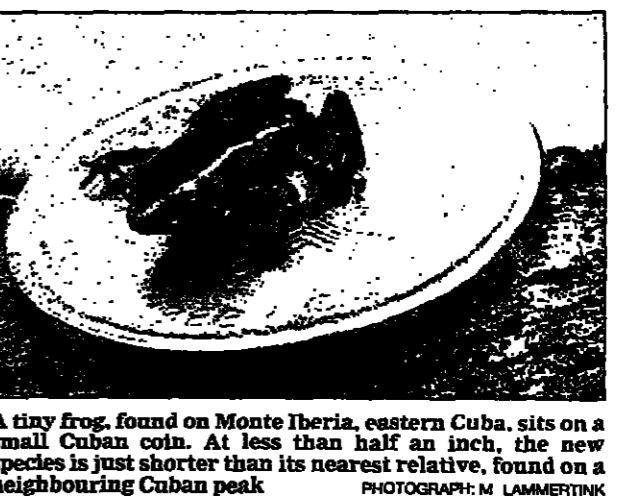
POLICE in Tokyo have recovered a bottle containing enough nerve gas to kill 15,000 people. The discovery followed the arrest of Yasuo Hayashi, a member of the Aum Shinri Kyo cult suspected of involvement in the Tokyo subway gassing during March 1995 that killed 12 people. — *AP, Tokyo.*

## Condors released

SIX young condors were released into the wild in Arizona yesterday, in a bid to re-establish one of the largest and rarest birds in North America.

## Sudan 'at risk'

A SUDANESE opposition group said yesterday that the flight of the former Sudanese prime minister Sadeq al-Mahdi to Eritrea would strengthen efforts to overthrow the Khartoum government.



A tiny frog, found on Monte Iberia, eastern Cuba, sits on a small Cuban coin. At less than half an inch, the new species is just shorter than its nearest relative, found on a neighbouring Cuban peak. PHOTOGRAPH BY M. LAMMERINK

## Iran's case will be heard

IRAN scored an initial victory in a complex legal battle with the United States yesterday when the International Court of Justice ruled that it could hear a dispute about the destruction of Iranian oil platforms by US warships in the late 1980s.

## Junta arrests democrats

DISSIDENTS in Burma have said that the country's military rulers have widened their crackdown on anti-government unrest, tightening security in the capital Rangoon and arresting members of the country's opposition party.

## New agreement on Ganges

INDIA and Bangladesh have signed a new treaty to share water from the River Ganges. The countries' leaders have hailed the agreement as a stepping stone to improved relations between the South Asian neighbours.

## Bomb blasts in Tajikistan

TWO bomb blasts rocked Tajikistan's capital, Dushanbe, yesterday, killing one person and injuring another. Just as the latest ceasefire in the central Asian nation took effect.

## Belgian MPs clear deputy prime minister of child-sex allegations

Stephen Bates in Brussels

**L**IO DI RUPO, the Belgian deputy prime minister, was cleared of having sex with under-age boys by a parliamentary commission which voted yesterday on party lines not to jeopardise the government by bringing a criminal case against him.

It ended a three-week ordeal for Mr Di Rupo — an avowed homosexual — and a three-day wrangle in the commission. It appears to have saved

Jean-Luc Dehaene's coalition government, but at the expense of further weakening the country's trust in its leaders.

Mr Di Rupo, who is the economic minister and the senior Socialist in the government, strongly denied having sex with anyone other than consenting adults, and threatened to resign if he was not cleared.

## Gaza Arab shot in Israel

**A**N ISRAELI farmer shot and killed a Palestinian worker he said he suspected was trying to break into his house in southern Israel before dawn yesterday.

But members of Samir Abu Shaqfa's family at the Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza believed the 40-year-old man was killed to avenge the fatal shooting of a Jewish settler and her 12-year-old son by Arab guerrillas in the West Bank on Tuesday.

The prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, speaking at the funeral of the mother and son, promised to "deepen" Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and said that settlements would be given added security.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a radical group opposed to the Israel-Palestinian peace agreements, claimed responsibility for the shootings.

"The attack comes within the PFLP's policy of fighting settlers wherever they are," a spokesman for the Damascus-based group said.

صبرنا من الامل

# Pardon deadline tempts apartheid guilty to surface

South Africa's truth commission was set up to identify those responsible for political crimes; now it is a broker for their selective liberty, reports David Beresford in Johannesburg

RIGHTWING extremists, feeling the pressure in their game of cat and mouse with Bishop Desmond Tutu's truth and reconciliation commission, have sent in a flood of last-minute applications for political amnesty.

More than 4,000 anti-apartheid activists and rightwingers are expected to apply before the official deadline expires at midnight tomorrow.

A series of strategically timed pardons in the past two days has encouraged the stampede. The list is headed by the former Conservative Party MP, Koos Botha, who faced prosecution for the bombing of a Pretoria school, and a police captain, Brian Mitchell, who was convicted of killing 11 people in 1988.

The country's former minister of law and order, Adriaan Vlok, has submitted an application, and at least 50 senior police commanders from the apartheid era are expected to follow his example.

Former military commanders seem more reluctant: the former minister of defence, General Magnus Malan, advised them to boycott the commission after his acquittal of murder.

Former president P. W. Botha, who has been implicated in apartheid crimes, including a bomb attack on the Johannesburg headquarters of the South African Council of Churches, is ignoring pressure to confess and apologise to the commission.

The commission's deputy chairman, Alex Boraine, said yesterday that a list of questions was being sent to Mr Botha.

The commission's amnesty choices in the past two days suggest a political motivation at work.

Two members of the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging who killed two black security guards during the theft of a lorry were refused pardons. They claimed that the murders and the theft were designed to show that black guards were incompetent and so restrict jobs in the security industry to whites.

Two other rightwingers convicted of murder after an attempt to steal weapons were also refused amnesty because the political organisation for which they were acting — the National Socialist Party — had only four members and was not widely recognised.

The release of Brian Mitchell, the police commander sentenced to 30 years for the Trust Feeds massacre, appears to set a precedent for perhaps the most difficult decision facing the commission: whether to release the assassins of the popular Communist Party leader Chris Han.

# Fear forces out Hutus



A boy soldier, a member of the Mayi-Mayi militia, gestures from a lorry leaving for the front lines near Butembo, north of Goma, Zaire, to join rebels fighting the regime of President Mobutu Sese Seko

Chris McGreal in Johannesburg

THE United Nations refugee agency says hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Hutus have fled its camps in Tanzania for fear of being forcibly repatriated like their compatriots who were driven home at gunpoint from eastern Zaire.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that as many as 100,000 people left the largest camp, Benaco, yesterday. Another camp, Ngara, which held 113,000 people, is almost empty.

Tens of thousands of refugees have fled at least a dozen other sites, meaning that at least half of the 540,000 Rwandan Hutus in Tanzania have now headed into the bush.

Meanwhile Rwandan-backed rebels in eastern Zaire declared a unilateral ceasefire yesterday and called on the international community to pressure President Mobutu Sese Seko's regime into negotiations.

"Because of much pressure from abroad we have stopped [the war]," said Laurent Kabila, leader of the Alliance of Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire. "This [war] can continue if there is not a clear indication from the international community and the gang in power in Kinshasa to say they are willing to surrender or to start negotiations."

A previous unilateral ceasefire broke down within days, and there is no firm evidence that the killing has stopped after weeks of fighting as the rebels — aided by Rwandan and Ugandan soldiers — press toward Zaire's third largest city, Kisangani, and diamond-rich areas in central Zaire.

Meanwhile the UNHCR said in Geneva yesterday that it would airlift emergency supplies for up to 100,000 Rwandan refugees in dense forest in east Zaire.

A UNHCR statement said food, blankets, plastic sheeting and medicines would be airlifted to Shabunda, 110 miles west of Bukavu, eastern Zaire. Unlike the refugee camps engulfed by the war in Zaire, those in Tanzania are not threatened by fighting. But Rwandan Hutus fled after Tanzania gave the refugees the forced repatriation of refugees.

yesterday but the government would not say whether the troops were there merely to try to prevent the refugees moving deeper into Tanzania or to force them home. State radio warned the Rwandans that they faced deportation or arrest for abandoning the camps.

A UNHCR spokeswoman, Judith Melby, said that the exodus from Benaco camp appeared to have been co-ordinated, presumably by the Hutu extremist militias — the interahamwe — which led the 1994 genocide of Tutsis.

"Certainly to us it looks like an organised movement, which we regret, since we had just started our repatriation programme," she said.

It is not clear where the refugees are heading. Some have fled by canoe into Uganda but UN officials believe the bulk are trying to reach Zambia or Malawi, a walk of more than 500 miles.

"They do not want to return to Rwanda at all. We have offered them assistance to return to their camps but they have rejected this. Countries they want to go to are Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and Malawi," Anette Nyektan, head of the UNHCR in Kigali, said.

## 'Sanctions in Burundi have started to yield results'

Although about 600,000 Hutus returned to Rwanda from eastern Zaire last month, it is unlikely that the bulk would have crossed back into their homeland if they had not been forced to by the Rwandan army and Zairean rebels hunting down the Hutu extremists.

President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya said a regional summit would be held in Nairobi on Monday to discuss the crisis in the region. It is not clear who will attend. Zaire boycotted the last one.

Mr Moi said the summit would assess the impact of the regional blockade against the military regime of Major Pierre Buyoya, who seized power in Burundi in July. "Sanctions in Burundi have started to yield results," Mr Moi said.

# A hundred ways to make an honest peso

Dire economic necessity has turned Colombians into a nation of quick-fix entrepreneurs, says Jeremy Lennard in Bogotá

AS AMBULANCES pull up in torrential rain outside the Hospital Militar in Bogotá, a tousle-haired man in shabby clothes rushes forward, offering patients his umbrella. The cost of a dry walk to casualty is 100 pesos (about 7p).

Alvaro is one of an army of impoverished Bogotanos who have an uncanny entrepreneurial eye for the smallest money-making opportunities. The city's informal labour market is booming.

Allirio Carvajal chose to set up business in the Parque de Santander — one of Bogotá's favourite haunts for lovers. He offers poeas and songs for sale, plus a Polaroid photo service. He reckons on taking five snaps a day. "If I take less, I don't eat."

Colombians are particularly inventive. "Given the economic opportunity, we would be a nation of high-flying entrepreneurs," says Martha Obregón, a sociologist. "As it is, creativity is simply a question of survival."

Much to the frustration of bus passengers and public telephone users, Bogotá suffers a chronic shortage of small change. So Mario sells 800 pesos in coins for a 1,000 peso note. He has been accused of taking advantage, but he believes he is merely satisfying the principles of supply and demand.

# Illegal immigrants can be modern-day slaves

from beatings, and an iron burn on the back of one hand.

LAST year Francesca Ekka went to the United States as an au pair and housekeeper to an affluent couple with two children. There was a large house with a swimming pool, a salary offer three times higher than what she used to earn and the promise of a better life for a young woman who had worked since childhood in her native India.

Seven months later, when the police found Ms Ekka after she dialed the emergency number, she showed the scars of her ordeal: a deformed ear from pulling and twisting, a healing welt under one eye and a swollen jaw

In New York city, members of Sakhi, an organisation formed to assist housekeepers and nannies from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, say they see 20 to 25 cases a year of domestic workers under varying degrees of oppression by their employers.

# 'Grave illness' silences Sinatra

Ian Katz in New York

THE world's most famous set of vocal chords will never hold a note again, according to friends of Frank Sinatra, who yesterday marked his 81st birthday quietly at his Beverly Hills estate.



Sheila MacRea, who once dated Sinatra before marrying Gordon MacRea. According to "music industry sources" quoted by the Post, "Of Blue Eyes' condition changes dramatically from day to day."

George Schlatter, a television producer who worked frequently with the singer, insisted that his demise was by no means imminent. "I called him a few days after he got out of the hospital... and he said he was out by the pool, smoking a cigarette. If you've had pneumonia or a heart attack, you don't smoke."



## You're test driving the new Audi A3. Do you:

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- b) roar past a wall of fire at the side of the road to an eighties soundtrack?
- c) just go for a drive?

If your answer is (c) please call 0345 698777 for more information.



## Protect our food chain

Consumers must be separate from producers

**BAD THOUGH** the last fortnight has been for ministers, it should have been even worse. Yet thanks to the 400 miles between London and Edinburgh, ministers have escaped much of the wrath the media would have imposed had the food poisoning scandal north of the Scottish border struck south instead. Eleven people have now died, 200 are infected and another 200 suspect cases await confirmation. The E. coli 0157 epidemic in Scotland is now the second worst in the world in terms of fatalities. Only Canada, where 19 were killed in 1985, has suffered a worse tragedy.

Like the BSE fiasco, the latest food poisoning saga should not have been a surprise. Responsible officials had already raised the alarm. In his final report last year, Scotland's retiring chief medical officer pointed to the new poisoning agent, which emerged in North America in the late 1970s, and was spreading rapidly in Scotland. The Scottish strain was known to cause diarrhoea, severe abdominal cramps and vomiting. Although most people would not be at serious risk, children and the elderly were always going to be more vulnerable to the bacterium, which can produce toxin that causes serious kidney failure.

Ministers could be forgiven for not being able to forecast a specific outbreak. Where they are at fault is in their general approach to food safety. It may sound good campaigning to cut red tape, but public protection requires rules and regulations. Last Saturday, our Scotland correspondent described the problems which Scottish environmental health inspectors had suffered in the face of ministerial scepticism towards their work. One minister — Nicholas Soames — dismissed food poisoning as "a mere inconvenience". Another, John Gummer, expressed scorn over a critical report on an outside catering event. The official, if unsp-

ken, ministerial line was that promoting business was more important than health inspection.

Scottish legislation itself is defective in regard to hygiene training for food handlers. The Government considered making certified courses obligatory two years ago but free market ideology triumphed and the proposal was dropped. Worse still have been the cuts to food research and local health inspection teams. The Institute of Food Research has suffered a 25 per cent cut to its budget while many local councils have been forced by financial restraints to merge their health inspectors into trading standards departments. In the words of our correspondent: "The impact of shrinking staff levels on an already over-stretched hygiene inspection service can only be guessed at."

It is against this background that the five-day delay in warning the public of the outbreak has to be judged. The Scottish Secretary blames local officials for the delay but as the Glasgow Herald noted, "he had no business leaving such an important decision to hard-pressed local officials". The delay has undoubtedly helped spread the infection. The scandal is now being investigated by three bodies: a police investigation into possible criminal negligence; a fatal accident inquiry which will be able to question ministers and officials; and an investigation into the disease by a panel of medical experts. A fourth group, a special cabinet committee, was set up by Downing Street yesterday to look at the lessons for the UK. One overriding lesson has emerged from the succession of food scandals — salmonella in eggs, listeria in cheese, mercury in fish, alar on apples, sulphite in wine, BSE — in the last decade: the need for a separate food safety agency. Separating consumer from producer interests is the single most important change to improve public protection.

## Trading in human rights

Raising low wages is surely part of what it's all about

THE WORLD is full of surprises. International trade talks normally take an eternity to resolve but the first meeting of the new World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Singapore has confounded its critics in two ways: it has not only secured considerable agreement on liberating telecommunications and information technology (IT) industries but also in getting the controversial question of human rights inserted in the final communiqué. The IT deal should help to reduce the price of lots of consumer goods — like cars, electronic games and washing machines — while the liberalisation of telecommunications could open up protected Asian and European markets while also enabling the information revolution to travel faster than it would otherwise have done to parts of the earth that can only dream about it. As the United Nations points out, more than half of humanity has never made a telephone call. There are 60 telephones for every 100 Americans but less than 0.5 for every 100 people living in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa). The dual process of opening up state-owned monopolies to competition and reducing tariffs could have a disproportionate effect on the Third World's ability to reduce information poverty.

Britain — which has one of the most liberalised telephone systems in the world and also two strong companies (BT and Cable & Wireless) — ought to be able to capitalise on the progress made in IT this week even if the scotch

whisky industry is the most headline-grabbing beneficiary (as a result of the US agreeing to phase out its tariffs over five years as a sweetener to secure the dismantling of Europe's high IT tariffs). After some last minute head-banging it looks as though today's declaration will have a form of words accepting the commitment of all WTO countries to core labour standards and recognising the Geneva-based International Labour Organisation (ILO) as the competent body to establish what those standards are. This is a positive step forward even if it falls short of the original objectives of the United States. For a mixture of motives (partly concern back home for human rights regarding the world's 250 million child workers and partly corporate pressure to remove low wages as a source of unfair competition) the US wanted a much more radical agenda. But some developing countries didn't want any mention of core labour standards linking trade with improving labour conditions in the final communiqué. Pakistan, India and Malaysia believe that US linkage of human rights with trade is a backdoor attempt to undermine the Third World's low-cost labour advantage. But no one should doubt that raising the wages of poor workers in developing countries is part of what this is all about. If in post-Thatcher Britain the CBI and the TUC can do work together in areas of mutual interest, there is no reason why the ILO and the WTO can't cooperate over basic human rights.

## The deadlock over gridlock

Engineering and pricing won't solve the car problem

IT CAN'T go on. Or can it? Yesterday London Transport underground was paralysed when two tube lines coincidentally came to a halt. The day before most of London above ground was gridlocked after a rogue lorry hit an overhead sign. The capital's problems always attract, unfairly, most attention, yet we all know that the whole country is driving into a dead-end crisis as congestion and pollution grow worse.

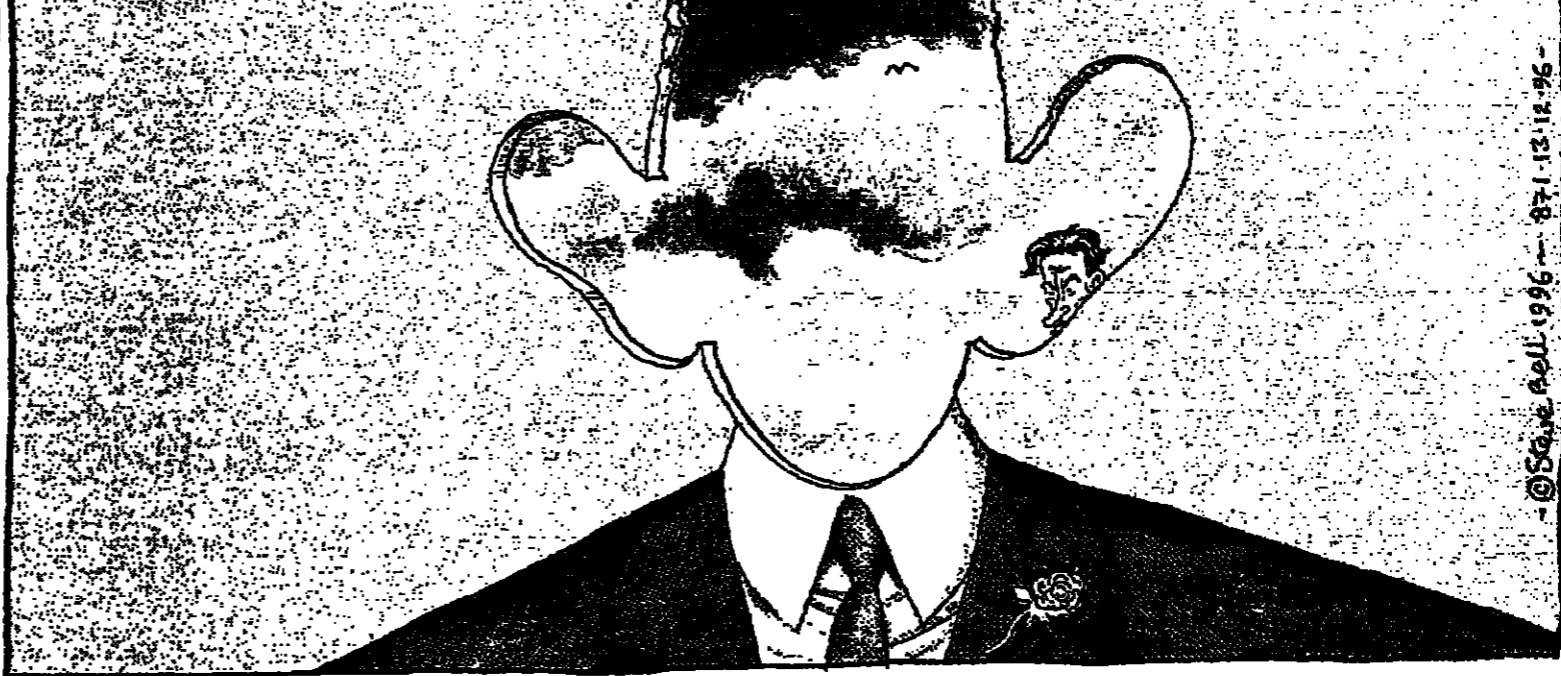
A new report commissioned by the Automobile Association says that car ownership will go on rising and that demand for road space must also rise relentlessly. What conclusion we draw depends on where we start from. The author of the report, Stephen Glaister of the LSE, writes that growth will continue "unless society faces up to this and makes a decision to stop it." The AA, not surprisingly, has decided in advance that it is unstoppable. The situation, it says, requires management

rather than denial of the aspirations of those who "see their lives being enriched by having a car."

Yet the real question is not denial versus satisfaction: it is how to tackle the underlying issues which create so much of the demand. Most parents do not drive their children to school because the distance is too far, but because public transport is uncertain and walking to school is perceived as unsafe (in large part because of the danger from road traffic — to which they then contribute). Satisfying this requirement then increases the motivation for possessing a second car — a quarter of all households now have two or more.

Pressures such as these which make cars appear the only option (though often chosen with reluctance) will not be eased by engineering works or even differential pricing. It is the breadth of life which needs improving, not the width of the road.

## BLANK SPACE MOST LIKELY TO IN 1997



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Letters to the Editor

## Capital just keeps marching on

**JONATHAN Eyal** (Commentary, 11) refers to global "free trade" as the objective of the World Trade Organisation whereas, in fact, it is the "free movement of goods and services". The difference is not merely a matter of semantics.

Free trade implies contracts between willing parties; free movement opens the door to economic invasion and the possible destruction of a national market sector. The Government is actually proud of the fact that it has been able to bribe such invaders to use the UK as a free entry into Europe.

Even free trade is not as beneficial as it once was. It still has a net zero outcome but these days it produces winners and losers. A trade deficit is hung over us for many a long year.

David Ricardo's classic concept of free trade postulated that mutual equity depended upon a neutral balance of trade over a given period, full employment in both countries, and no export of capital in either. The ignoring of those conditions has produced a century or more of

trade wars. The Gatt Agreement and the WTO have given legal authority to the curbing of national economic sovereignty by the global markets. Hence our presidential election with the contestants vying to deliver virtually identical economic policies.

Cyril Appleton, Frome, Butts Meadow, Lower Hardres, Canterbury, Kent CT4 5NU.

**JONATHAN Eyal** fails to appreciate that corporations, in national, multinational and transnational forms, have historically enjoyed vast economic and political power; it is hardly a new phenomenon.

But when the political leaders he points to — Kohl, Clinton and Blair — bow to the "new realities" of global markets and global corporations, this is hardly evidence that corporations or the economy cannot be controlled. It is more a reflection of the fact that Western political leaders both help to produce, and are positioned by, the hegemony of assertions that political leaders should not try to control corporations and the

economy. Men and women make history, said an old philosopher, though not in circumstances they choose.

In the week we remember Raphael Samuel, it is worth recalling that Marxists — for whom "globalisation" is neither new nor surprising — have long advocated efforts to control capital in its national and international forms. On a daily basis, workers' movements and community activists show their willingness to resist these "new realities" — ask the Liverpool dockers or the opponents of the dumping of the Brent Spar.

Capital can be opposed, corporations and economies can be subject to far greater democratic control. The fact that Western political leaders collude with "the chairmen of multinational capital" is hardly evidence that "trends" they hide behind. (Dr) Steve Toms, Hill Road, Birkenhead L43 8TL.

European government takes place just at the time when each of the countries concerned is busily demolishing professional government. Small wonder the electorate is given no clear options at Westminster or that few bother voting for MEPs.

Des McConaghy, 10 Falkner Street, Liverpool L8 7PZ.

**AT** last someone has defined the problem sensed by today's political agonists. As an elderly socialist (and thus with no sense of irony, I ask in all seriousness, can Dr Eyal or anyone prepare the beginnings of a solution?

When I hear from a national figure with convincing credentials and the courage, intelligence and vision to address the problem, I may again believe democracy to be achievable. Religious and other non-rational suggestions are not required. E W Went, 5 Trewenna Drive, Potters Bar, Herts EN6 5JW.

## Five verdicts on Two Brains

**I CANNOT** rejoice over the departure of Mr Willetts (Willetts pays the price, December 12). It has left the system he worked in intact and uninvestigated. Unlike the committee, I can easily believe in the truth of his evidence, except that instead of "naive and arrogant", I would say "drunk with power and prepared to use it". In the context of the Tory Whips' Office, the two are clearly the same.

Without sight of the Whips' Office files on the Hamilton affair and similar ones, how can we reasonably single out Willetts for censure? Sara Clarke, 45 Church Street, Hayfield, High Peak SK22 2JE.

If a parish councillor were being tried for corruption, and his/her influential friends were caught trying to persuade the jury to ignore the offence, the very least those friends would get would be six months in jail for conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

How then could any report, however damning, or even temporary suspension from Parliament, be regarded as harsh or adequate punishment for David Willetts? Laurence Otter, College Farm House, Mill Lane, Wellington, Salop TF1 1PR.

**DAVID** Willetts is held up as an example of an honourable man. Are his standards to which the Government would really have us aspire in its declared aim of raising the moral climate of society? Eileen Noakes, Ridgeway, 2 Lower Warren Road, Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 1LF.

**I SUGGEST** "to willett(s)" joins "boycot" and "quitting" as an acronym, meaning to plead an archaism in self-exoneration. There would also be an echo of the cry of the American bird, the willet: a cry of injured innocence? Simon Currie, Flatts House, Leathley, Otley LS21 2JT.

**I'D** like to commend David Willetts for at last doing the honourable thing, but I'm terribly afraid that he knows some medieval meanings of the verb "to resign" — signifying "to stay in place whatever the pressure". Could it be so? A Purcell, 18 Bourville Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 0UE.

## When Domes day fails to come

**INSTEAD** of the Millennium Dome (Millennium star project faces axe, December 11), why not build something which exploits British construction technology, remains useful after the event and gives £200 million back to the people who paid for it? No contest — Greenwich is the ideal location for the Millennium Hospital.

Britain is still pre-eminent in medicine. British medical equipment needs a showcase, the market for healthcare designers overseas is enormous and the prospect of a health park riding on the back of this new hospital is very real.

Any more spinoffs? Well, we need not build that ridiculous Royal London Hospital project costing £300 million — let's just leave it as a peripheral hospital. We can save Bart's on the same basis and Whitechapel also.

If our Millennium Hospital cost £200 million and we save £300 million at the Royal London, then we get our hospital for nothing, and have something to show for it.

Howard Goodman, MPA Health Planners, 105-111 Euston Street, London NW1 2EW.

## IT'S TO CELEBRATE WORLD PEACE SO WE THOUGHT WE'D SETTER LEAVE IT TILL 3000

**I** had visualised a grand version of the Commonwealth Institute with the several pavilions beneath the splendid dome located on the Greenwich Meridian. That seems the perfect place not for just a UK project, for there are already plans for many celebrations, but for a Oneness In Spirit to accept the year 2000 as a "chance to start again" with the family of nations. (Rev) Joan Duncan, Sapperton End, Maynards Green, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 0DD.

**IF** we really want to mark the Millennium in London, why don't Norman Foster and Richard Rogers apply their combined brilliance to sorting out the dreadful mess that is the Elephant and Castle? Leo Jasnin, 50 High Street, Warboys, Cambs.

**THE** BEST present we can give the next century is to ensure that no-one is sleeping rough unless they choose to and that every young person has a job or real training or full-time education, with genuine opportunity ahead of them, not false promises. Books not bridges, homes not domes, I say. Anne Dunn, 25 Eaton Place, Brighton BN2 1EG.

**A** TRUE dome is self-supporting from its circumference. The proposal for Greenwich and the Millennium is merely a dome-shaped tent. Just like the Government, it will lack support from the outside and will be propped up from within. Ian Castle, Wimborne, Whitehill Road, Meopham, Kent DA13 0NS.

## Royal command

**YOUR** anonymous charitable source is much less than charitable when he tells you (Inside Story, December 1) that the Queen's patronage of good causes is of little practical value.

Any one of the 800 or so charities enjoying her patronage will tell you that the presence of the Queen on their notepaper is an assurance to potential donors of the integrity of those charities. What is more, her name on the notepaper is often a magnet to those deciding which causes to support.

As for her personal charitable donations, I do not know what means your informant has for establishing either their destination or size, since they are made anonymously. But I can tell you, from personal experience, that, when she is able to help directly, she most certainly does so. It is tough doing good quietly without being defamed for it.

Sir Sigmund Sternberg, Sternberg Centre for Judaism, 30 East End Road, London N8 2BY.

## Crumpacked

**FUSTIAN** names have their part in journalism as well as in novels or real life (Letters, December 7, 9, 13). When I was a reporter on the Daily Express in Manchester in 1985 the entirely fictitious T Lowingham Sproat, described as a retired British Railways executive, featured irregularly in the paper's columns — perhaps a guest at a party, occasionally a witness to some minor event.

In the reporters' room of the Yorkshire Post, we supported a similarly invented Seth Piggishanks. He mourned at county funerals with a sufficiently large attendance for him to appear without undue suspicion, and was a sporadic interviewee, especially on agricultural matters.

It was a matter of pride for reporters to guide these creations past the sub-editors and into print. I am confident that modern departments of media studies set their faces rigidly against any such practice. Barrie Heads, 4 Cole Park Road, Twickenham, Middlesex TW1 1HW.

## Last words

**THOSE** who, like Susan Gibb (Letters, December 12) demand that gender or race (or, in Northern Ireland, religion) be a major factor in selection or promotion in order to "redress imbalances" appear to suffer from a form of ethical blindness. They complain of past discrimination while demanding present and future discrimination. Paul Rowlandsdon, 42 Hillview Avenue, Londonderry BT47 2NU.

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## Why I quit

**FRANCIS** Whelan (December 11) accuses me of inconsistency in resigning from Conservative Central Office because of my disagreement with John Major's stance on a single currency whilst remaining a parliamentary candidate. Yet CCO is constitutionally the office of the Leader of the Party; so I had to quit my job if I wished to campaign against Emma.

My counter-infiltration of Newham North-east Labour Party 20 years ago was prompted solely by its takeover by the Revolutionary Socialist League (aka Militant Tendency) and, as for Nato, even Whelan should be able to appreciate the difference between a voluntary alliance and a common European defence policy subject to irreversible supranational control.

Finally, your Diary (December 11) claims that "with some insolence" I denied being the source of the Evening Standard report that Emily Barr had lured New York East in my presence. I had nothing to do with the appearance of this false story. (Dr) Julian Lewis, 8 The Parade, Southampton Road, Cadnam SO40 2NG.

## A Country Diary

**NORTHUMBERLAND:** A small herd of wild goats are feeding on Yeavering Bell scrambling about on the tors for sustenance on the flats above the Cheviots. These nomads of the hills are not indigenous natives of the Cheviots but have eked out a living on these hills for several hundred years. Yesterday the farmer at Kirknewton Tor was looking to his sheep at midday. "I was high out," he said, "About 1,750ft. I saw the goats grazing just below me. We like to see them, they don't integrate with the sheep, we take hay to the flock in severe weather but the goats always move away when they see me come."

In midwinter, they still heft on his land but survive only on gorse, even in weeks of thick snow. They run between Wester Tor and Easter Tor and the herd has slightly increased in numbers over the 18 years that this farmer has been in the College Valley. "Our farming policy has changed in the last five years, we have fewer sheep on the hill. Perhaps this has helped

the goats, I've noticed there are now about 25 in the herd. They must be inbred, their nearest contemporaries are on Carter Bar." They tick in February and March, which can be a harsh time of year in these Northumbrian hills. The rannies come down to the sheltered valleys to have their kids and get among the rocks and bushes.

Today, when public concern is expressed about dwindling species, the wild goats of our Cheviots hills arouse little interest from conservationists. Perhaps it is just as well. The nearest true relative is the ibex capra ibex, naturalists who have studied skull and horn growth of the feral wild goat and the Spanish wild ibex have noticed a marked similarity. None of us will ever know how many of these remarkable goats survive but it is wonderful that a nucleus do — with no help from mankind. Northumberland National Park wardens keep an eye on our Cheviot goats and usually know their whereabouts.

VERONICA HEATH

صكنا من الاميل



سكرا من الامم

Diary  
Matthew Norman

THE Spectator has evidence that the tradition of the condemned man enjoying a hearty meal survives... in this case not breakfast, though, but a Last Supper. And what a Last Supper. And what a Last Supper, when columnist Alan Watkins and Bruce Anderson, next to whom Fatty Scamies is a skimmer Kate Moss went to the Connaught. Begging politeness, they chose—who else? David Willetts, and Bruce relates that the trio began with champagne (£7.75 a glass), moving on to a '94 Montagny (£34.50 per glass) and then two bottles of claret, a Calton Bannock, at "a mere £55 a bottle". Fading wines were £10.20 a glass, while the Armagnac was less than £13. As for the food, Bruce had languisne saled, chicken consommé with truffles, woodcock, and finally trifle. Although Alan also stuck to the set menu, a bargain at £55, it is hard to be precise about cost. Bruce says the bill came to "a shade over £300", almost worth an entry in the register of member's interests—but if Mr Willetts enjoyed his Last Supper, who are we to quibble over money?

DIARY pop correspondent John Redwood is investigating rumours about Virginia Brumley. After losing interest in Babylon Zoo (well, you know how fickle they are at that age), it seems she has transferred allegiance to the Spice Girls. "Yes, it's awful," says a glum source in Whitehall. "At first she was mad about Victoria, the peak one, but now it's Emma, the cheeky one with the pigtails. It could be worse—it could be Geri, the topless one—but the pigtails don't go down well in Cabinet." But surely she will listen to reason? "No she won't. Whenever we try to argue about it, she just shouts 'girl power', and sticks her tongue out."

An encouraging breakthrough for London Underground communication skills has been spotted at Epsom. "We apologise for the fact that there are delays on all areas of the Piccadilly line tonight," read a blackboard message yesterday. "This is due to the late running of trains."

TELEGRAPH enforcer Boris the Jackal Johnson is learning Welsh. The Tory candidate for Clwyd South is being tutored by a lawyer at his paper, and is picking it up well. The Jackal was out when we called to discuss it yesterday. "The Guv'nor's not here, see," said a high-pitched voice, redolent of Hil-De-Bi's camp announcer Gwladys Pugh. "He's off stinging and talking about what's wrong with Welsh rugby with his friend Maxal." And the Jackal mastered the Welsh for "stay lucky?" "Look, boy," rasps the voice, "my Guv'nor knows how to give that message in every language in the world."

AFTER deep consideration of the morality involved in publishing leaked material, under the tutelage of Professor Piers Morgan of the University of Ethics, we have decided to return to the 10-page document Your Guide To Working For Harriet next week. How long should Harriet's meetings last? Who are her campaigners for Shadow Cabinet elections? If it's the third Tuesday of a month with a 'C' in it, and Jack Dromey rings between 11.27 and 11.33am, what colour toothbrush should you peck in Harriet's overnight bag? Everything you ever wanted to know about working for Harriet Harman is here—and you can read it exclusively in the Diary next week.

COACHES of the Atlanta Braves baseball team have questioned pitcher John Smoltz after he arrived for training with several five-inch burns on his chest. Eventually, Mr Smoltz confessed that it happened when he tried to wear his shirt while still wearing it. "I've done it that way five or six times," he explained, "and never had it happen before." This insulting stereotype of the half-witted sports jock... will it never fade away?



Annual Austin '96 out now. £4.99 inc. p&p (Sarnia Publishing, Treasalt, Cardigan SA43 2JG. 01239 811242)

# Watch out, sex and violence are about

## Commentary Peter Preston

WHAT, pray, about adults? A suddenly beleaguered species in a media world where Michael Howard and Virginia Bottomley claim centre screen—and children (pre-electorally, that is) come first. "We shouldn't all be condemned to a diet of nursery fare," says Jocelyn Hay, one of TV's brighter campaigners. Amen. But the gruel is flowing thick and fast.

Watch this tide turn to flood through the coming months. Its dimension, and the totemic floating on top, can be precisely predicted—for America, as ever, has seen it first. In the next three days, one gap ahead of statutory controls, the US TV industry is producing a "voluntary" system of programme gradings. The Daily Mail and the rest of the pack—scornful of

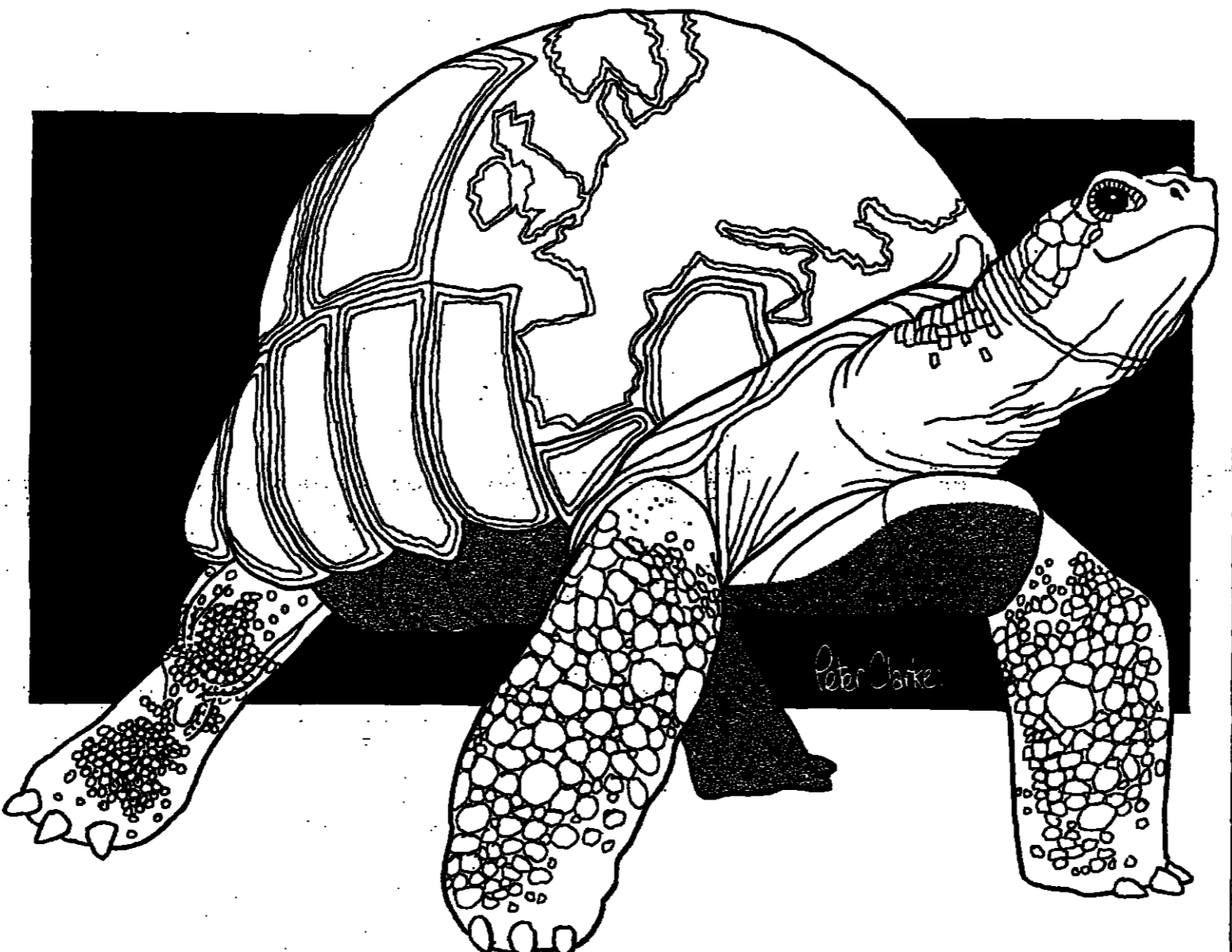
producer guidelines—will love them. The Commons Heritage Committee may be off again to New York on one of its fact-finding "missions" before you can say Bloomington. There will henceforth be six gradings for American television. Two covering shows specifically for children—TV-K and TV-K7 (suitable for over sevens)—and four wider ones. TV-G (for general) promises "little or no violence, little or no sexual language and little or no sexual content". TV-PG has "limited coarse language, limited violence and some suggestive sexual dialogue". TV-14 may contain sophisticated themes, strong language and more intense violence. We can virtually forget TV-M (for Maturity); only a few late night channels can touch that anyway.

Sounds reasonable? The devil, as usual, are detailed ones. If TV-14 is the most grown-up mainstream television can get, what kind of shows will it cover? The grading committee is happy to give examples. The X-Files, NYPD Blue— even that recent Friends where two of them fought over a single condom. We're not taking moral carnage here. We are merely

lowering the roof on "sophisticated themes". And (more devil, more details) it won't be enough anyway. The pressure group clamour demands ever more information. If a show is PG, is that because of some language, some violence or some sexual banter? Give us TV-PG-SL/SV/SS and all available variants. Consider the gorgeous, interminable scope for argument and agitation. Did you know that the "sexual content" during American TV's "family hour"—8 to 9 in the evening—has grown from 43 per cent in 1976 to 75 per cent in 1996? That is this morning's fresh research from something called the Kaiser Family Foundation. But sexual content is "talk about sex" or "sexual conduct like flirting or kissing". Ludicrous Definition Creep. It needs all gift of prophesy to see where all this will end for the broadcasters. You can glimpse it every night in your own homes before the sacred, shrinking "watershed" hour. The gamesmen and sit-coms and nervous soaps are piled ever higher, sheltering in Rolf's Animal House. The evening, for adults, sometimes only starts at 9—if you're a tired farmer who goes to bed early

(because he has to be up with the lambs at 5am) would be brain dead before he's sheared his first sheep. Sophisticated themes? Pass the HP Sauce. Worse, because ratings drive the engine and there aren't enough insomniacs around, the progressive triumph of the anodyne and the offensively inoffensive is assured. Because we're too feeble to tell the children what to do, we condemn ourselves to kiddyfication. I wonder whether the tabloid editors so keen on this pruriently vague crusade know what they're getting into. For why, in logic, should anyone stop at TV gradings? The Daily Mail was hyper-vague this week after the latest Bottomley intervention. The trouble, it said, was the

"general coarsening of what appears on our screens". Who lines up for General Coarsening in this stout brigade? Private Adultery and Prostitution, all present and incorrect. Sir, Corporal Deviant-Sex and Sergeant Drug-Taking ready for duty. But the General's army fights on many different fields. Turn a few pages on in that selfsame Mail and you can find a nice lady journalist, with nice pictures attached, explaining why she slept



Euro-sceptics have been making most of the noise so far, but **John Monks** condemns their 'jingoistic claptrap' and calls for Britain to be at the heart of EU decision-making

# Why we need Europe

BEHIND the smoke-screen of the Conservative Party's civil-war barrage—and what a spectacular war it is proving to be—the news from Dublin this weekend will be that Europe is again inching forward. This is uncomfortable news for the Euro-sceptics and for most of our newspapers, but not for the TUC. British workers need Europe to succeed. We think it is historically necessary for Europe to succeed. And we believe that Europe will succeed. Not without difficulty, no doubt. Not without it being dubbed "two steps forward, one step back". But the sense of direction is clear and positive.

But why, after spending the 1970s regarding the European Community as a multi-national's paradise and a protection racket for peasant farmers, has the TUC become a cheerleader for all this? Has the world turned upside down? Surely public expenditure is cutting to meet the Maastricht criteria? Isn't that why the Spanish workers are on the streets this week following the earlier disputes in France and Germany? In the medium-term the answer to the question about public expenditure is no. Public expenditure—the uprating of hospitals and schools and other public services—is a function primarily of our economic success,

and to some extent our fiscal and political priorities. And in the medium term I have no doubt at all that Europe is where we have to be. Moreover, which part of the world already has the best public services? The European Union has at its heart strong public services, strong welfare states and decent rights and protections for workers. That's the TUC's model too, and it is one which should attract wide support from the left and centre left. In the 1920s Ernest Bevin called for concerted action in Europe to tackle unemployment. Today the TUC echoes that call, and I am encour-

course, one government—guess which—is adamantly opposed to it. Our Government will, however, have different representatives at Amsterdam, I trust. The Prime Minister and his colleagues are wrong to report parrot fashion that "it won't create a single job". But we do have to consider how to get the right balance of economic and monetary policy in Europe and give the Council for Finance and Economic Ministers real leverage in relation to the European Central Bank. Second, the draft Treaty at Dublin opposes the incorporation of the Social Charter,

certation", that is joint work, on new employment initiatives at national and regional level. It calls on the social partners and the local authorities, and where they exist, the regional authorities, to draw up "territorial pacts" giving maximum added value to the structural funds which are of growing importance as Europe develops, as are the trans-European transport networks being promoted by Neil Kinnock. This brings me inevitably to the \$64,000 or €6,000 euro question: is all this really happening or, as Lord Tebbit and others fondly imagine, is

## The TUC wants a wide-ranging, high-level task force set up to assess how the UK can adjust to the euro and what it would mean in real terms for jobs and services

aged by the text of the new treaty which is likely to be signed in Amsterdam in June. I think it is shaping up to be an important step forward in Europe's history, addressing some of the major concerns which are worrying Europe's citizens. First, I am pleased to see for the first time phrases like "a high level of employment" at the heart of a new chapter on employment, something the TUC, as part of the European Trade Union Congress, has been campaigning for ever since Maastricht. Of

Europe ought to fall flat on its face. I say no, it isn't. The hard pounding on the stability pact between Chancellor Kohl and President Chirac means that the real terms are being hammered out on the anvils right now. It will be a compromise. Maybe some will call it a fudge. Do you expect the general secretary of the TUC to say that is the end of civilisation as we know it? I have been watching with interest the growing schizophrenia at the Daily Telegraph and the Times where

they shout "no fudge" one day and "those right criteria are going to ruin the economy the next. And for a government, that's Westminster which has privatised more than any other and has flogged off the family silver, to complain that France is fiddling the figures really deserves a special prize for efficiency. But we mustn't let the nervous breakdown in the Conservative Party become a nervous breakdown for Britain. The hard facts are that the euro is still likely to go ahead and on time, though with a few fudges, no doubt. The UK will have to decide to join or remain outside, either shadowing the euro or with a floating currency. If sterling devalued against the euro, then some action might be taken by other states against British exports to the single market. The TUC wants a wide-ranging, high-level task force set up to assess how the UK can adjust to the euro and what it would mean in real terms for jobs, services and competitiveness. And most of all we want to substitute a proper informed basis for debating in place of the jingoistic claptrap of the little Englanders. We have been late into virtually every other major European initiative, and in so doing forfeited influence over them. When will we learn?

I have been watching with interest the growing schizophrenia at the Daily Telegraph and the Times where

John Monks is general secretary of the Trades Union Congress

# But it's all over now, Liz and Hugh



Bel Littlejohn

GREAT EXPOSE in G2 of the so-called phenomenon that is Hugh Grant. His supporters might argue that Grant is "just an actor". Oh, yeah? This reader was left in no doubt that Mr Grant and his sidekick Hurley are two of the most blameworthy persons of our times. With their snooty upper-class accents and ever-so-English ways, the sooner they are chucked overboard the healthier it will be for this beleaguered nation of ours.

It doesn't take an economist to realise that ever since the release of the risible Four Weddings and A Funeral, Britain has been going through a severe crisis of identity. Are we part of Europe or are we a separate nation-state? What are we to do about the increasing age of the population as the millennium approaches? Whatever happened to the promised classless society? Will Rupert Murdoch continue to be allowed to run roughshod over any form of limits to media-ownership? And what about the homeless and the increasing number of old folk? And what of Charter 88? Not until the advent of Hugh Grant in his most "successful" (note the inverted commas) movie did these grave problems hit us where it hurt. But his performance crystallised—and in many ways exacerbated—the British disease of ignoring crises. In fact, you could argue that without the influence of Hugh Grant and his notably Grant-like performances in ruinously popular films, Britain would be a proud, confident young country, topping the economic league of Europe, perhaps the world, with adequate provision for the poor, the disenfranchised, the homeless and the elderly. An actor, Hugh Grant seems able to take on only two kinds of roles: those in which he plays himself, and those in which he doesn't. His films hardly vary, either, the ones that aren't set in the present are set in the past, and those that aren't set in America are set in Britain or somewhere else. His own character, too, seems relentlessly the same, as though he were so limited in his imagination that he can only ever conceive of himself as one and the same person. Charming? Hardly. For me, charm amounts to a lot more than a diffident smile, "perfect" manners, a whimsical haircut and an oh-so-English "pleasant" demeanour. If you told me Jack Straw MP was charming, I'd agree with you.

Or the smashing Margaret Beckett. But Grant? Nah. Historians point out that the cracks have been appearing in Hugh Grant's "perfect" image ever since he was born. His biography is a catalogue of fatal mistakes amounting to an avalanche of indiscretion. He was born into a family that was neither working-class nor upper-class but somewhere in between. He never recovered. Aged five, he came only third in his primary-school egg-and-spoon race. The humiliation was never forgotten. He never recovered. Aged 18, he passed three A levels, but Grant knew full well that, had he taken two further A levels in subjects he knew nothing about, he could well have faced catastrophic failure. And—on this all commentators are agreed—from this humiliation he would never have recovered.

Disaster followed hard upon disaster, humiliation upon humiliation. As Hugh Grant reached the age of 14, he was already a magnet for disaffection and disillusionment. Around him, the Western World was enveloped in a major oil crisis. Watergate was looming and the British nation was forced to struggle through a three-day working week. Yet Grant remained blithely unconcerned. For the young Hugh, it was almost as if he wasn't to blame. By the time Grant was 18, the Western economies had plunged into a downward spiral. And what of Elizabeth "Liz" Hurley? She seems to believe that her tarnished notion of "glamour" will see her through everything. Ruthlessly seizing every opportunity, she seems to think she can just sit back and wait for the world to owe her a living. But we're not all like you, Liz. If ever I go to a new movie—the latest Ken Loach for preference—I might just do something patchwork and a little bit ethnic I bought three years ago at a three-day working week. But I'd never parade my body around the local Odeon half-naked in Versace. And nor would Margaret Beckett or Jack Straw.

TOO have been a successful actor in my time (starring as Cath in the 1975 semi-professional rehearsed reading of Wesker's The Kitchen at the Theatre Upstairs, Market Harborough) and as a senior Guardian columnist I've been subjected to the full glare of the media spotlight for over 15 years now. So let me give this tip to Grant and Hurley: sorry, but we're not interested in you any more; we're not remotely obsessed by your sexy outfits, your glossy smiles and your boring career moves. And these days, let's face it, who would even bother to write a column about you? Yup: it's over, loves, it's over.

Bel Littlejohn will soon be voted BBC Female Personality of the Year

# Good-bye battery



Welcome to the future: Seiko Kinetic®, the first quartz watch that turns your movement into power. Every move you make is converted into electrical impulses by a tiny built-in powerhouse. Ecological, reliable and efficient: wear it one day to gain energy for at least two weeks. Wear it daily—it will run continually. Made of titanium: light, yet strong and kind to your skin. 20 bar water resistant. One-way rotating bezel and screw lock crown. Seiko Kinetic—It's built to last. Someday all watches will be made this way.

SEIKO KINETIC  
Seiko Kinetic at: <http://www.seiko-corp.co.jp>

Vance Packard

Enemy of the admen

VANCE PACKARD, whose best-selling books of popularised sociology developed a powerful critique of America's post-war consumer culture...

American political culture likes to deny. From the world of New England private schools to the pews of the Episcopal church...

From private schools to tweed jackets and stout brogue shoes, Packard explored the WASP establishment...

advertising allowed businessmen to "catch a glimpse of the potentials inherent in endlessly expanding the wants of people under consumerism"



Vance Packard... an old-fashioned American moralist

dog lazed on the front porch with two stably married parents and a mother referring not to work, and rationing the use of TV to no more than five hours on weekends...

the natives and walk among their two-century-old homes. He spent his summers in the similar idyll of Martha's Vineyard, where he became a leading campaigner against commercial developers...

but wanted to enjoy it on his own terms, which meant recognising the dangers of abandoning the traditional virtues of family stability and village churches and products that last a lifetime...

Edward George Edwards

University challenger

TED EDWARDS, who has died aged 82, made the University of Bradford as principal of the Bradford Institute of Technology in 1957...

Spain with the International Brigade but was turned down in 1941 by the Communist Party and was active in its Science for Peace group...



Ted Edwards... giving invention light

and national press, and also wrote on higher education and university planning for academic journals. He served on the editorial board of an international journal, The Scientific Worker...

Edward George Edwards, chemist, born February 18, 1914; died November 21, 1996

Marin Sorescu

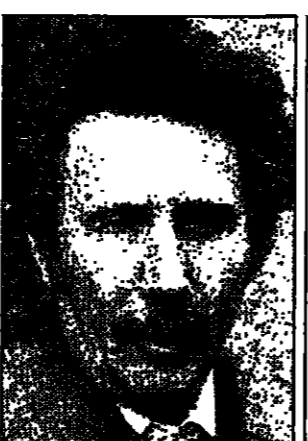
Tales of the unexpected

IN THE mid-1980s, when Romanian poets were at last catching up in the consciousness of Western readers with their famous Eastern European peers...

Inadequate to tether this abundantly talented, exuberant poet only corporate culture, but the increasing self-indulgence of an American society that was getting hooked on hedonism...

Each new passenger on the tramcar is a carbon-copy of the one who occupied the seat before him...

Sorescu was born in the village of Bulzesti, in Oltenia, southern Romania, the fifth child of a peasant family...



Marin Sorescu... a way with words

home on the arts page before setting up his own literary journals, most prominently Branches (Ramuri), published from Craiova Writers' Union...

HE WAS a quiet-mannered man, not noticeable in more than his flamboyant company, but below this unassuming surface one detected the rough warmth and sly humour of his peasant forbears...

enabled him to benefit from the liberalisation of the mid-1980s and carve himself a niche of freedom from which he was never dislodged.

He was also a successful playwright and artist. In this country, Vlad Draculea, The Impaler, was performed in Oxford and broadcast on Radio 3 in a powerful version by Richard Crane...

In 1993, Marin Sorescu was appointed minister of arts. He enjoyed the receptions and presenting poetry on television, but disliked political life and hated ministerial drudgery...

Giving Sorescu a book to be signed often resulted in a rapid flip-flop drawing of the dedicatee. I have three such English editions. At home in Bucharest, last month, he was too weak to repeat that amiable gesture...

Marin Sorescu, poet and dramatist, born February 15, 1936; died December 8, 1996

Wilf Carter

The yodelling cowboy

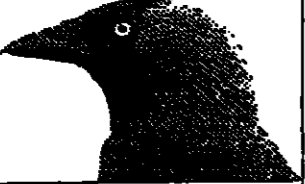
WILF CARTER, who has died aged 91, belonged to the first generation of yodelling cowboy singers in what would later be called country music. A Canadian who made his name singing a quintessentially American music...

and many others, at first issued only in Canada and Australia but by 1936 in the US and UK as well. His effect on the young country music idiom in Australia in the 1930s is incalculable...

By then he had made more than 30 albums. The last would come in 1989, titled Whatever Happened To All Those Years. Some were more elaborately produced than his early sides, but none took him far from his familiar narrative terrain of open range and rainbow trails...

Wilf Carter, country singer, born December 18, 1904; died December 5, 1996

Jackdaw



1990s so far

WHAT has happened is awkward to define. There's precious little room for analysis, no time to think things over in our zippy straight-to-screen world, where life — any life, every life — is instantly repackaged as advertising or cartoon, as tabloid drama or household brand...

ad-men use E-soaked visuals to flood you noodles. Funfairs are called Worlds. Pop stars go house-hunting and it's proper front page news...

THE cities of Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, Texas, constitute the largest border community on earth, but hardly anyone seems to admit that the Mexican side exists. Within this forgotten urban maze stalk some of the boldest photographers still roaming the streets with 35mm cameras...

thornier issues thrown up by modern relationships. And the decade's obsession with all things ironic creates, like all these other things, a set of people linked just because they get the gag.

THE cities of Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, Texas, constitute the largest border community on earth, but hardly anyone seems to admit that the Mexican side exists. Within this forgotten urban maze stalk some of the boldest photographers still roaming the streets with 35mm cameras...

the new City on the Hill, beckoning us all to a grisly state of things. Like all the shooters in Juárez, Julian is keenly aware of the season. In November and December, there is a bumper crop of drug murders...

THE cities of Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, Texas, constitute the largest border community on earth, but hardly anyone seems to admit that the Mexican side exists. Within this forgotten urban maze stalk some of the boldest photographers still roaming the streets with 35mm cameras...

dream of his death. Someone is coming at him with a gun or a knife and there is nowhere to run. As they fire at him or shove in the blade, he raises his camera and gets the ultimate murder photograph. "I will die happy," he insists.

THE cities of Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, Texas, constitute the largest border community on earth, but hardly anyone seems to admit that the Mexican side exists. Within this forgotten urban maze stalk some of the boldest photographers still roaming the streets with 35mm cameras...

could take out, Ondasjie edits what he has written so as to "leave an indelible story". Ondasjie lives in Toronto, is married to a poet, Linda Spalding, and has two children, but his 1982 memoir, Running In The Family, is very much that of a son...



Right in your... Face

Birthdays

Edward Brenton, playwright, 76; Lord Black, politician, 82; Jim Davidson, comedian, 42; John Francombe, racing commentator, 44; Chris Gorringe, chief executive, All-England Lawn Tennis Club, Wimbledon, 51; Arizona Humpal, actress, 52; Genevieve Page, actress, 68; Christopher Plummer, actor, 67; George Shultz, economist,

former US Secretary of State, 76; Prof Olive Stephenson, childcare expert, 66; Maj-Gen Sir David Thorne, director-general, Commonwealth Trust, 63; Sir Laurence van der Post, writer and explorer, 90; Dick Van Dyke, actor, 71; Paula Wilcox, actress, 47; Brian Wilson, Labour MP, 38.

Death Notices

SAARUJ, Raphael, historian, died at home. His unique spirit unappreciated, a poet, actor, composer, friend and husband. Burial at Highgate Cemetery, Swains Lane, West London, December 12 at 1.30pm. Memorial Meeting to be announced.

You can E-mail us. It's free. jackdaw.guardian.co.uk. fax 0171-713-1866; Jackdaw, The Guardian, 115 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER.

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enger

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# Finance Guardian

## Top financier suspected of helping insider dealers

Paul Murphy

**A** CORPORATE financial official close to the top of one of London's biggest investment banks is suspected of being the primary source for price-sensitive information used by a possible City insider-dealing ring.

A full-scale inquiry by the Department of Trade & Industry into the ring — first disclosed in the Guardian earlier this month — is focusing on trying to prove links between the corporate financier and the most prolific member of the suspected dealing ring.

While the latter cannot be named because of the surveillance operation mounted by City regulators — has uncovered evidence of a tightly organised group of investors and stockbrokers.

They are believed to have made huge sums from advanced knowledge of several high-profile mergers and takeovers, going back a number of years.

The DTI is looking into suspicious dealings in the shares of up to 10 companies.

Investigators are said to believe that their most promising lead involves the purchase of around 22 million worth of shares in BTR Nylax. This Australian concern was taken over by its parent, the British conglomerate BTR, in the summer of last year.

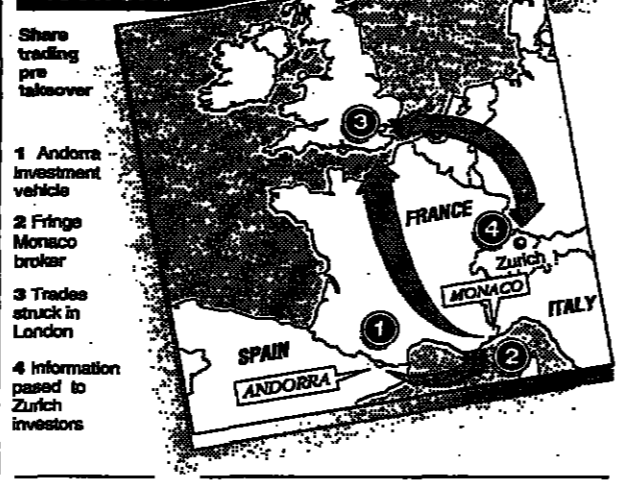
The Andorran fund bought the shares three days before BTR announced it was buying out minority shareholders for £2.6 billion — a move which triggered a 40 per cent jump in the Nylax share price.

It has also emerged that deals before the takeover of Rothmans International, the tobacco group, in the spring of last year, are being analysed as part of the investigation.

The suspicion that some investors were acting with advance knowledge that Richemont, the Swiss holding company, was about to spend £2.6 billion buying out minority investors was flagged at the time of the deal.

Shares in Rothmans jumped almost 10 per cent in

### Insider dealing network



the hours before a statement on the takeover was rushed out, and insiders would have made a profit of almost 30 per cent once the deal was completed.

Lord Swaythling, Rothmans' then chairman, demanded a stock market inquiry. "There has been a leak. I am furious," he said at the time.

"It is unhealthy and unsatisfactory. There should be no excuse why the Stock Exchange can't get to the bottom of the leak."

While there is no suggestion that employees at any of these companies or their advisers are under suspicion, all are thought to have furnished the DTI with information. Rothmans had no comment on the matter yesterday.

Other individuals under investigation include two former fund managers. One is a resident in Monaco who was active in London during the

### How ring operates

**M**EMBERS of the dealing ring are understood to be prolific users of a trading mechanism known in the City as "cash & new".

It is effectively a way of betting on credit, and it is frowned upon by many stockbrokers. The mechanism involves buying shares in the target company on the basis that the investor does not have to pay — "settle" — for up to 25 working days.

Around about "day 20," if the expected price-enhancing news has not yet emerged, the investor sells the shares for immediate settlement, and then buys the stock back again on the 25-day "delayed settlement" basis.

This procedure can be repeated several times, allowing a big position in a company to be rolled forward for several months.

Each time the shares are "cash & new-ed", the investor pays for, or profits from, any move in the share price.

Such deals attract a small margin payment to the dealer carrying out the trade. They also attract the attention of City regulators.

## Notebook Plastering over the cracks



Edited by Alex Brummer

**A**FTER two years of deliberations and consultations the Securities & Investment Board, the leading City regulator, has finally moved to close a gaping hole in the financial community's defences against insider trading.

It has been axiomatic that almost every bid in the 1990s has been heralded by sharp movements in the cash share prices, partly as a result of contracts entered into in the derivatives market. The most highly contested bid of the 15-months, the Granada battle for Fortis, was signalled by several days of heavy options trading, which has been particularly difficult for the regulators to track and has been beyond the remit of the criminal insider trading legislation.

Under a new set of principles now outlined by SIB, such use of derivatives or indirect trades, made on the basis of insider information, will be strictly forbidden. City firms will be required to write into their internal controls new rules effectively banning the use of derivatives in takeover situations.

In some respects, the new rules go beyond the criminal insider trading law in which it is possible to argue that because information has been widely disseminated, no offence has been committed.

Much of the regulatory interest in stamping out derivatives trading ahead of takeover bids arises from the use by the Swiss Bank Corporation of contracts for differences in a number of utilities at the time of Trafalgar House's failed bid for Northern Electric in December 1994, the first time this technique had been used in a prospective takeover. This use of derivatives for "bid facilitation" — the hope of benefiting from prices rises in the target company and the sector once the bid becomes public — is also now verboten.

Sir Andrew Large and the SIB deserve credit for moving to stamp out what has been a serious market abuse, available largely to professionals with a clear understanding of the complexities of derivatives markets. However, as in the case of pensions mis-selling the snail-like speed at which the City authorities work — when faced with a serious challenge to the integrity of the markets — is deeply disturbing.

## Wickes hopes to rebuild its profits the DIY way

Roger Cowe

**S**TRICKEN DIY retailer Wickes yesterday succeeded in launching a rescue share issue to restore its finances following the £42 million fraud discovered in the summer. But analysts and investors said the company still faced an uphill battle to become viable; they believe its best hope lies in being taken over.

Chief executive Bill Grimsey acknowledged yesterday that he had received a stream of interest from potential buyers but was concentrating on getting the chain back to profitability.

Mr Grimsey, who took over after the departure of former boss Henry Sweetbaum when the fraud emerged, said: "We have a strong strategic position, strong sales growth, we now understand the trading margins and the cost base."

But analysts said they did not have a clear picture of the company's profit margins and were not convinced Wickes would make a profit next year.



One institutional shareholder said the company's financial state was still fragile even after the rights issue, and it lacked strong retail management.

"Its greatest value is its strategic position in the industry," he said.

Wickes' precarious state is reflected in the price of the rights issue, which will raise £53 million. Shareholders are being offered one new share at 15p for each one they own.

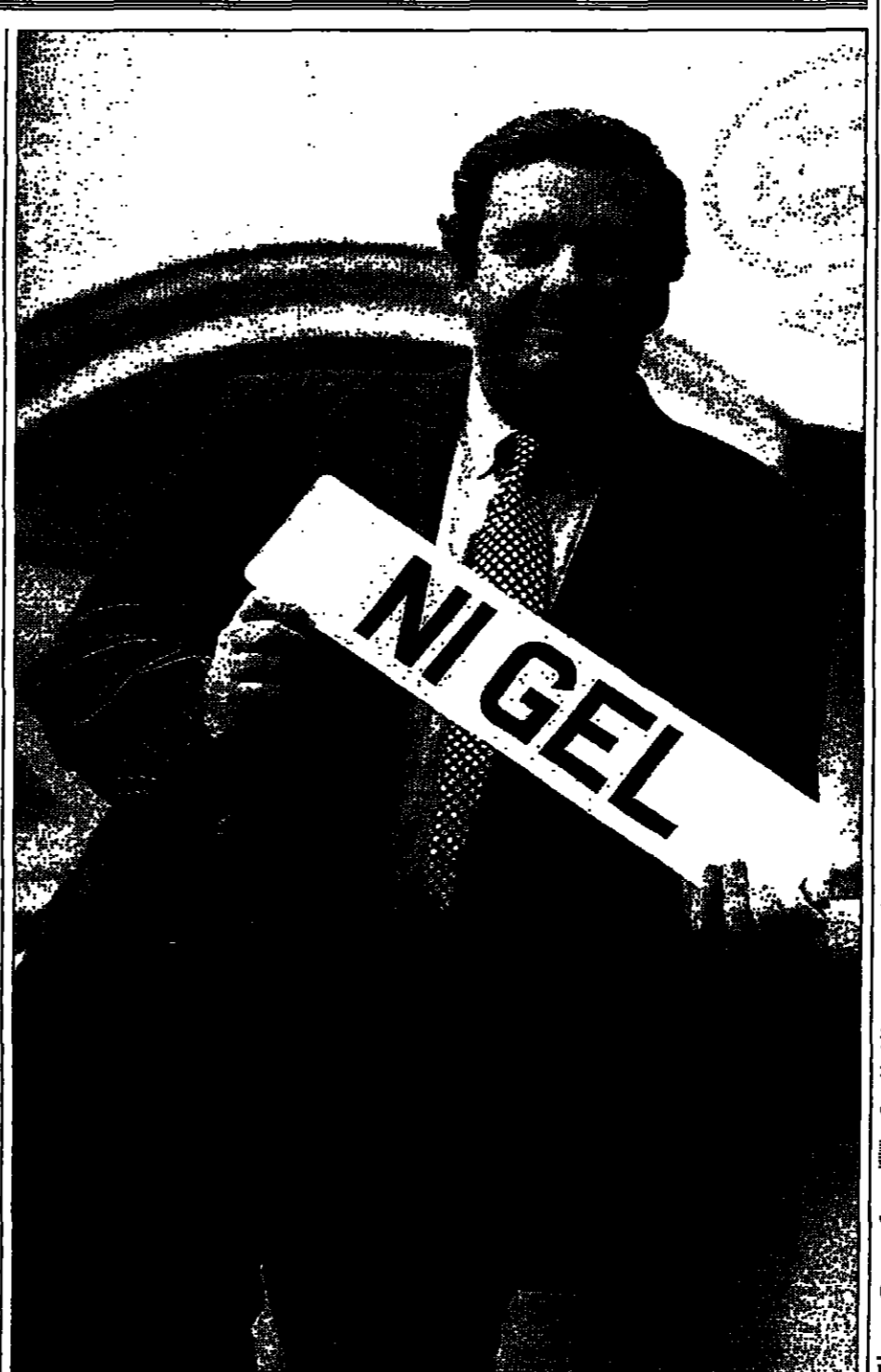
In June, when the shares were suspended after irregularities in buying arrangements were discovered, they were priced at 69p.

In a letter sent to shareholders yesterday, the directors warned that the company would go into receivership without the rights issue and associated capital restructuring. But even with the proceeds from the issue, debts at the year end are likely to be more than the restored shareholders' funds, resulting in substantial interest costs.

Shareholders are also told that losses for 1996 could be as high as £56 million. In the nine months to September Wickes made a loss before tax of £53 million.

Mr Grimsey said Wickes would sell or close its operations on the Continent.

The rights issue prospectus will be published today and will show that Mr Grimsey and finance director Bill Hoskins, who have 18-month contracts, have been awarded options on shares worth three times their salaries.



Mark of distinction... Nigel Bowerbank pays £20,000 for his name PHOTOGRAPH: WAYNE STARR

## M&G punished as investors pull out

Ian King

**O**NE of Britain's biggest independent fund managers, M&G, said yesterday that unit trust investors had cashed in almost one-third of their holdings after the group's unit trusts arm suffered one of its poorest years on record.

M&G, which manages some £8.3 billion worth of unit trusts, said it had been punished for its "disappointing year" with a record increase in the number of customers cashing in their investments.

The company said it had suffered a 47 per cent jump in redemptions over the year, to £584 million, although David Morgan, M&G's group managing director, insisted the figure was "considerably lower" than the industry average.

M&G's traditional policy of investing in high-yielding stocks and smaller companies has left its retail funds among the poorest performing in the unit trust industry this year.

However, the group said other factors had played a part, not least fears among small investors that margins on both sides of the Atlantic had reached worryingly high levels. M&G also said it had suffered a small sell-off during the time of the Morgan Grenfell affair, with some investors mistakenly assuming the two were related.

But Mr Morgan insisted that the level of redemptions

## Regulator fines bank £5,000 for rogue trader

Richard Miles

**T**HE Securities and Futures Authority yesterday fined the London branch of Denmark's biggest bank £5,000 for letting one of its traders deal in shares without proper authorisation.

The trader himself, Ole Rasmussen, who was fined £5,000 for dealing on behalf of private clients without receiving any instructions from them, has since been dismissed by Den Danske Bank.

The bank has paid compensation to what it says is "a handful" of clients who lost out from Mr Rasmussen's activities in the first half of 1994. Den Danske, which is not saying how much it has had to pay, has closed its London private banking division but is continuing institutional business.

Mr Rasmussen, who is believed to have returned to Denmark, "clearly understood that he was not permitted to undertake discretionary trading," the SFA disciplinary tribunal concluded.

On a separate matter, the SFA found that Mr Rasmussen had carried out unauthorised deals for his personal account.

Den Danske, which yesterday agreed to pay £5,000 towards the authority's costs, acknowledged that controls in its private client banking operation were not up to SFA standards.

## Money on a plate for the Treasury

**A** 45-year-old Essex businessman yesterday paid £20,000 for a number plate bearing his name.

Nigel Bowerbank kept his nerve during frantic bidding at the DVLA's Classic Collection auction in central London.

The price of £20,000 for N1 GEL — with £20,000 VAT and commission added on top — narrowly beat other big prices of £15,500 paid for 1F and £48,500 for 1V. However, other names did not even come close, as an estimated £1.5 million was raised at the auction for the Treasury.

Mr Bowerbank, who runs Name Bank Numbers Ltd, selling personalised telephone numbers, said he was looking forward to putting his new number plate on his Rolls-Royce.

He said: "I'm very pleased to have got it. It's an investment, really, but it would look good on my Rolls-Royce."

Personalised number plates have become big business over recent years with specialist dealers offering thousands of numbers.

Tony Dark, 35, paid out £26,000, excluding VAT and commission, for 1 UK — to put on a lorry at his firm, UK Packaging, based in north London.

For some bidders, the auction was a chance to buy a loved one a Christmas present to remember. Others among the crowd of more than 200 were shocked by the prices, with the cheapest of the 80 lots on offer being TUR 1N at £2,800.

They preferred to watch the spectacle and ensure they did not rub their noses at the wrong time.

Many of the successful bidders preferred to keep their identities secret with a significant proportion of them being telephone bidders.

The DVLA decided to capitalise on registrations which have become vacant and have held a number of sales similar to yesterday's.

The price of £20,000 for N1 GEL fell well short of the auction record for one of the DVLA's classic registration plates. That is currently held by K1 NGS, which fetched almost £250,000.

ments have been doing just that. Ward that the privatised utilities are not all they were cracked up to be has got abroad, it seems. The name of privatisation is tarnished.

Sir Colin is an activist and has decided to put the record straight. He has called for the help of every privatised company chief and the top dogs from banks, law firms and accountants that have worked on Britain's privatisation programme to champion the cause. At an inaugural meeting of the group (attended by 45 of the 74 firms invited) yesterday he called it a "collective promotional effort in the national interest, for the national good."

It sounds good. But this is a dog-eared enterprise.

First, the idea was hijacked by the Tory high command who claimed it was a fight back against Labour's windfall tax plans. Result: many of the invitees recognised it would be cross politics to get involved.

Now the group has given a pledge not to launch its activities until after the election. That retreat clearly draws the political sting and could be enough to make Tony Blair as well as the Margaret Thatcher's closest kin feel comfortable.

Privatisation is an earner for Britain. And there is an argument that its name should be kept polished up so that British companies and banks stay in the van. But Sir Colin cannot hope to convince the world that privatisation has been all for the good.

It is easy to suggest that the bad name of British Gas, Yorkshire Water, and the great collective of Utility Fat Cats is all the product of sensational journalism. Great if people would believe that US companies are buying up the electricity industry because they are highly efficient organisations run under tight, consumer-friendly regulation. And wonderful if enthusiastic foreign governments were leaping to ape the British model in its entirety.

But foreign governments aren't naive. They are picking bits from the privatisation menu. They see where the British experiment has failed and the dangers of ordering the whole meal.

Companies like BA should be wary too. While the utilities are in such a mess, successful firms will only get tarnished by association.

## Royal error

**F**ORGET the glee with which critics of the European Monetary Union have leaped upon differences among its main proponents, Germany and France, over the intricacies of the stability pact. Today, simultaneously in Dublin and Frankfurt, the penny will be seen for the first time with the release of specimen euro notes.

Fearful of arousing nationalist ire the new notes are understood to have used symbols such as bridges, representing the link to the future, and open windows pointing to the future. Also missing, of course, will be the Queen's head — offering a wealth of opportunities to the sceptics.

## Safety net for care insurance

**B**UYERS of insurance schemes to pay for care in old age will be granted the full protection of the 1986 Financial Services Act under Treasury plans announced yesterday.

Placing long-term care insurance under the act will bring the products within the scope of the Investors Compensation Scheme, the ultimate safety net for consumers who suffer loss through bad advice or negligence. The ICS can pay up to £48,000 in redress.

The Treasury's detailed plans for the selling and marketing of care policies are set out in a consultative document published yesterday. A complementary proposal on partnership schemes for the care of the elderly is expected from the Department of Health early next year.

The Treasury officials hope to implement the changes, if backed by the insurance industry and other interested parties, through a statutory instrument, so avoiding the need to seek a slot in the crowded parliamentary schedule.

Insurance companies, which have been lobbying for lighter regulation of long-term care insurance, welcomed the proposals.

Commercial Union, the market leader, said the move would boost consumer confidence and encourage more people to plan responsibly for their needs in old age.

TOURIST RATES — BANK BELLS

Australia 2,017.0	France 8,272.5	Italy 2,488	Singapore 2,250
Austria 17.37	Germany 2.47	Malta 0.5780	South Africa 1.52
Belgium 50.88	Greece 393.00	Netherlands 2,740	Spain 207.69
Canada 2.19	Hong Kong 12.44	New Zealand 2,288.5	Sweden 11.06
Cyprus 0.7482	India 52.82	Norway 10.376	Switzerland 92.19
Denmark 9.4975	Ireland 0.8675	Portugal 250.00	Turkey 16.543
Finland 7.54	Israel 5.43	Saudi Arabia 8.15	USA 1.6130

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Irish shilling)

# Americans use whisky to lure EU into ending trade tariffs

Larry Elliott in Singapore

SCOTCH whisky distillers are set to be surprise beneficiaries from a deal between the European Union and the Americans about the world's \$300 billion-a-year trade in information technology, it emerged yesterday.

Washington agreed to speed up the removal of US tariffs on European brown spirits — whisky and brandy — as a "sweetener" to win Brussels' approval for a transatlantic hi-tech agreement finally secured in Singapore yesterday.

With the big US producers of information technology products desperate to get open access to the lucrative European market, American negotiators also approved a five-year plan to phase out tariffs on whisky spirits, including gin and vodka.

The breakthrough was being hailed yesterday as a prime success for the first ministerial conference of the World Trade Organisation, which ends today.

However, the deal will only come into force if other nations agree to open trade in IT products.

The EU and the US want the agreement to cover 90 per cent of global trade, and have set a deadline for mid-March for nations, notably Asian states, to sign up.

Last night, it was clear that Brussels and Washington were already close to getting the necessary 90 per cent, with Japan, Canada, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and nine other countries on board.

WTO officials are confident that the agreement will provide impetus to separate talks on opening up telecommunications markets, due to be completed by the middle of February.

"It is vital for just about every industry in the world," said one WTO source. "The consequences are enormous. It will mean people all over the globe will have access to information. A doctor in the remote parts of Africa might, for example, be able to get access to information to help

with his diagnosis." The Trade and Industry Secretary, Ian Lusk, said: "This is very good news. Britain is a major player in the IT scene and we have worked hard to secure this deal."

Sir Leon Brittan, European commissioner for trade policy, said the IT deal represented the biggest step forward for free trade since the end of the Uruguay Round three years ago. "This is a huge advance for the world economy," he said.

Europe has higher tariffs on information technology than either the US or Japan, but agreed to the deal when the Americans threw in the tariff cuts on spirits.

Sir Leon, under pressure from the French, refused to accept the US definition of computer software, fearful that Hollywood would use CD-Roms as a backdoor way of exporting films to Europe.

Brussels was forced to give way on graphic display tubes and fibre optic strands after intense lobbying by US industry.

Under the terms of the agreement, tariffs will begin to be phased out in July and will be gone by the turn of the century. EU sources said that they would be happy to see full implementation by the start of 1998, stressing that freer global markets would boost Europe's \$28 billion-a-year trade in IT. They said the deal on spirits would give European producers an extra \$21 million in tariff cuts every year.

"We are naturally very excited at the news," said Lee Chan Ho, managing director at LG, South Korea's second-highest electronics producer. "Zero tariffs will enable us to more than double our profits overseas."

The ITA "is very important for the whole of British industry, which benefits from cheap and readily-available supplies of IT products from whatever sources around the world they want to take them from," Christopher Roberts, Britain's director general of trade policy, told the Bloomberg Forum. "The greatest beneficiaries are the users of IT products."



Talking head... Siemens chief executive, Heinrich von Pierer, is committed to group's UK expansion, while number of people it employs in Germany is falling PHOTOGRAPH: CAMAY SUNGU

# Siemens pledges to expand its £1 bn Tyneside chip plant despite recent collapse in market

Nicholas Bannister reports from Munich on a group which sees its future abroad

SIEMENS, the German electronics and electrical engineering group, yesterday committed itself to building the second phase of its new £1.1 billion semi-conductor plant in North Tyneside but warned that it might be several years before the expansion took place.

The second phase is expected to generate 800 new jobs on top of the 1,000 due to be created by the first phase which is just being completed.

However, Siemens sources indicated that the initial investment was creating jobs at a lower rate than expected and that the second phase might not be started until the early part of the next century.

About 500 people have already been recruited and this is likely to rise to about 750 by the end of next year, well below the initial target.

Heinrich von Pierer, Siemens' chief executive, said yesterday that the start of the second phase would be delayed because of the recent collapse of the semi-conductor market, where prices had

fallen by 80 per cent in recent months.

The North-east had feared the setback in the computer chip market could lead to the second phase being abandoned or moved to the Far East.

"I do not know when we are going to start the second phase," said Mr von Pierer. "The semi-conductor market is really down at the moment and it would not make sense to build up further capacity."

"But we are sticking to our basic plans. We will just have to adjust the timing to the market. The investment is in the interest of the investor and the government."

He added that while Siemens was in favour of a single

European currency, the group's investment strategy in Britain would not be affected by the UK government's lack of enthusiasm for monetary union.

Mr von Pierer said the group had no plans to move the second phase development to a low-cost Asian country. "In the case of a highly automated computer chip factory, the labour cost does not play a large part in the investment decision."

"Labour costs are 50 per cent lower in Newcastle than in Germany but only account for about 15 per cent of the overall cost. It does not play a major part."

Mr von Pierer, speaking at Siemens' annual press conference, said the group now employed 379,000, the first increase in five years, but the numbers employed in Germany had fallen.

"Within the last three years our domestic workforce actually was cut by 60,000," he said. "This reduction was offset by the hiring of some 30,000 new employees."

But Mr von Pierer said that Siemens, Germany's largest employer, would have more than half its employees located outside the country for the first time within the next two years. He pointed out that personnel costs in Germany had risen 7 per cent last year. He also forecast that international businesses would account for 70 per cent of Siemens' total business by the end of the century.

He warned that profits, which have risen by 50 per cent over the past two years, to DM2.5 billion (£1 billion) before exceptional items would be virtually unchanged this year.

But he expected profits to soar next year as the electrical and electronics businesses caught up with Germany's economic upturn.

Siemens expects continued problems with its industrial and building systems group, its medical engineering systems group and its components business. But these should be offset by improvements in other parts of the group.

# Scotch makers distil the news with caution

Ian King

SCOTCH whisky manufacturers gave a guarded reaction to news of the deal between the European Union and the United States to liberalise trade in their area.

The industry's trade body, the Scotch Whisky Association, has campaigned for the removal or reduction of tariffs. In particular it has accused Japan — already ordered to reform its liquor taxes by the World Trade Organisation — of dragging out the changes following the failure of talks last month.

Campbell Evans, a spokesman for the association, said the deal was good news but its real significance was the longer term "knock-on effect" it could have on other countries wishing to join the WTO, such as China.

"Anything that brings forward reform is good news, but we wouldn't get too excited by this," Mr Evans said. "But if it means we can put pressure on countries like Taiwan,

which is a very big market for us, and China, which is potentially a huge market, it will be good news — especially if we can exert pressure on Japan to speed things up."

Individual producers were equally wary of the news, just three weeks after Chancellor Kenneth Clarke reduced domestic duty on whisky for the second year running.

Murray Loak, spokesman for Guinness — whose whisky brands include Johnnie Walker, Bells and Dewars — said the deal was only of "symbolic benefit", although he hoped it would encourage other countries, particularly China and Japan, to increase the pace of tariff reform.

"The tariffs affected are not high," he added. "What we are talking about is maybe a couple of cents on a typical bottle of scotch, so what is important here is the message that it sends out to other countries."

Linda Bruce, spokeswoman for Glenmorangie, said: "Any speeding up in the removal of tariffs would be very welcome."

# New hands on oldest watchmaker

VACHERON Constantin, the world's oldest watchmaker, has been bought by Vendome, the maker of luxury goods, from the former Saudi oil minister. Sheik Ahmed Zaki Yamani, it emerged yesterday, writes David Goss.



Sheik Yamani (pictured), the leading force behind the two oil-price shocks of the 1970s and 1980s, sold Geneva-based Vacheron, founded in 1755, for an undisclosed sum. He has been the majority shareholder since 1987 and will maintain close links.

Vendome already owns such prestige names in watchmaking as Cartier, Piaget and

## News in brief

### De Vere Hotels sale ruled out

THE pubs and hotels group Greenalls yesterday ruled out the sale of its 20-strong De Vere Hotels chain, despite reports that the bulk of the hotels would be sold. "There have been reports in the press of the sale of De Vere Hotels but the company has no plans to sell De Vere Hotels at this stage," a spokesman for Greenalls said. However, he admitted there was "likely to be a change in the shape of the De Vere hotels division" as the company sped up "the process of upgrading the portfolio". It announced the long-awaited sale of its six hotels in the US for £14 million last week. Yesterday, the group posted pre-tax profits of £148.7 million, a jump of 48 per cent, largely on the back of its Boddington pubs acquisition last year. — *Reuter*

### Scottish Hydro buy-out

SCOTTISH Hydro, the electricity group which has made several aggressive moves into the English power station market, indicated yesterday it was preparing to spend some £250 million to buy out its partner, United Utilities, in the Keadby power station project. The move was announced as the group announced that its pre-tax profits for the first six months of the year stayed relatively flat on £61.8 million.

London Electricity, one of the few regional companies not to have received a formal bid approach, saw its interim profits slide 18 per cent to £99.3 million as the group felt the bite of two separate regulatory price reviews. — *Simon Beavis*

### Harvey Nichols blooms

HARVEY Nichols, the fashionable store in Knightsbridge, west London, said yesterday it was sharing in the retail boom, with sales in the six months to September up by 15 per cent and that rate of growth continuing up to Christmas. The store, which is controlled by the Hong Kong company Dickson Concepts but floated on the stock market earlier this year, reported pre-tax profit for the half year up from £4.1 million to £5.5 million despite the extra costs of setting up a new store in Leeds and new ventures such as the Ox Tower restaurant on the south bank of the Thames in central London. — *Nicholas Bannister*

### Acquisitions bolster Mail

PRE-tax profits at Daily Mail and General Trust, the publisher and media company, this year rose 8.3 per cent as the higher cost of newsprint was outweighed by new acquisitions. The company, which publishes the Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday, said pre-tax profit for the year ended September 28, before exceptional gains and charges, rose to £86.6 million from £80.0 million.

Exceptional items in fiscal 1996 included reorganisation costs of £11 million, a special dividend from its stake in the Press Association of £3.3 million and gains on the sale of business and other assets. The company said it will pay a dividend of 19.4p per share, up 9 per cent. — *Bloomberg*

### Hoover in court

A COURT hearing began yesterday whose outcome could spark further legal action against Hoover by hundreds of people denied free trips. Merseyside county court heard evidence from two of 14 people seeking compensation for the free flights to which they claim entitlement but which they never received. The hearing was adjourned until January 9. Hundreds of other victims have contacted the plaintiffs' solicitors. Some 600,000 people claimed free flights from Hoover following a special offer that began in 1982. But only about 255,000 people ever got their trips. The embarrassing episode cost Hoover's former US parent, Maytag, some £48 million before it sold Hoover European Appliances to a loss to Candy group last year. — *Rachel Baird*

## Cellphones

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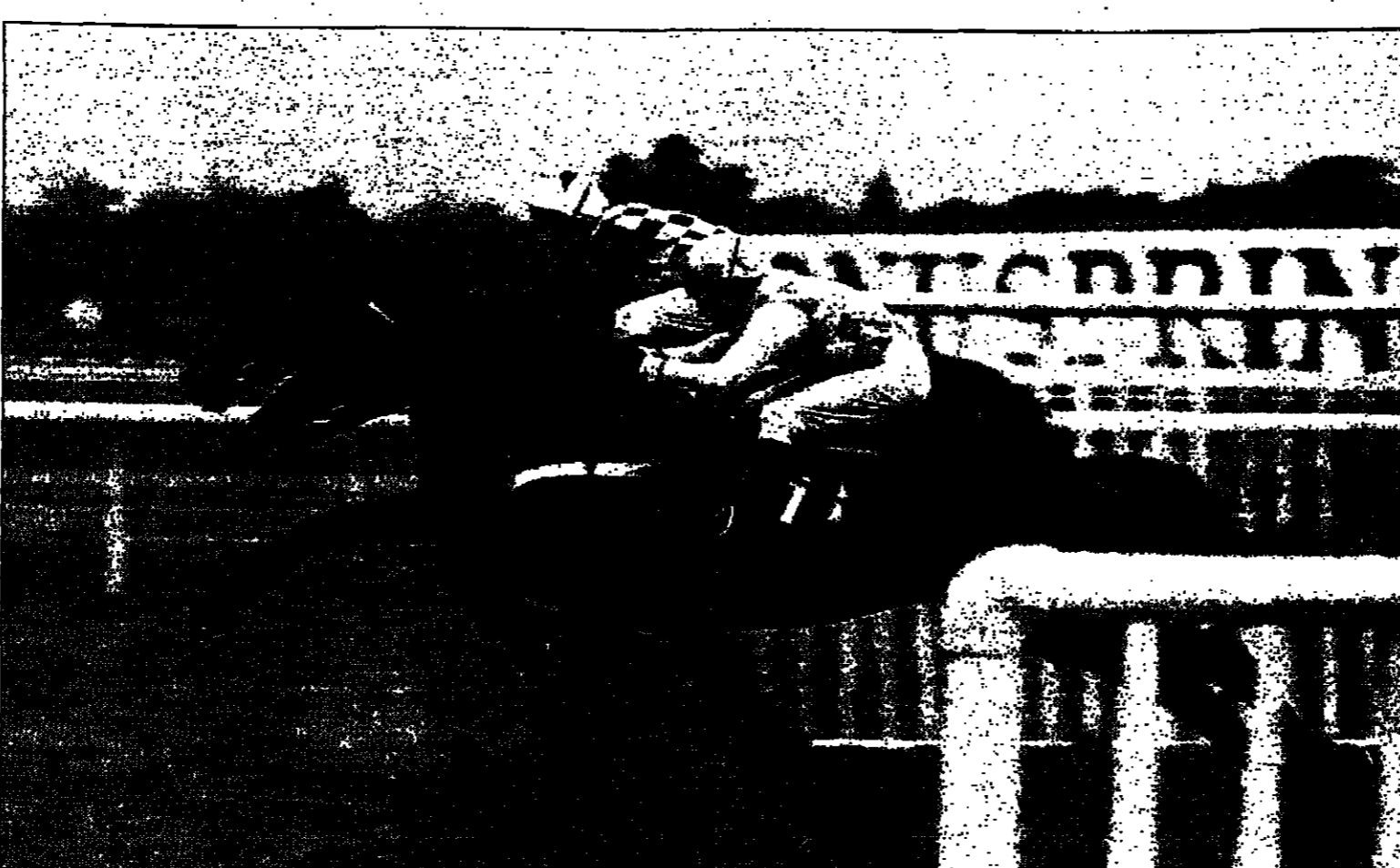
صحنه من الراحل

Racing

New jockey for the Grand National winner's seasonal debut tomorrow. Ron Cox reports

Thomton sets out on Haydock quest

ROUGH QUEST, the Grand National winner, will have a new jockey when he makes his seasonal debut at Haydock tomorrow. Andrew Thornton steps in for the ride in the Tommy Whittle Chase because Mick Fitzgerald, who coolly steered Rough Quest to victory at Aintree, is required at Cheltenham.



Close call... Yahmi takes the final flight with Jack Tanner (nearest camera) on his way to victory at Sandown yesterday

Terry Casey, Rough Quest's trainer, is unconcerned that a new jockey will be partnering his gelding. "Andrew hasn't been able to school the horse but he's an uncomplicated ride and it shouldn't be a problem," he said yesterday. Thornton, who rides regularly for Kim Bailey and Tim Forster, has steadily increased his winning tally since he landed the amateur riders' title in the 1992/93 campaign and last season rode 52 winners.

Rough Quest is being thrown in at the deep end on his return to action as he will have to cross swords with One Man. However, the conditions of the race are in Rough Quest's favour. He gets 12lb from One Man and there is only 8lb between them on current official ratings.

"I couldn't be more pleased with him but he's a big, burly horse and he's going to need the run," said Casey. "The main thing is that he completes the course in one piece. We want to give Rough Quest at the King George and then we have both the Gold Cup and Grand National in mind. As long as the ground is good to soft at Haydock I'll be happy. The only reason I didn't go to Cheltenham was because the ground was on the firm side."

The prevailing fast ground means that Collier Bay is virtually certain to miss tomorrow's Bula Hurdle at Cheltenham. "There will have to be a dramatic change in the weather for him to run," said trainer Jim Old after walking the course yesterday morning. Old travelled on to Sandown where he saddled Yahmi, in the Collier Bay colours, to floor the odds laid on Jack Tanner in the Bovis Crowgap Winter Novice Hurdle.

"Last season he was beaten by See More Business, Super Risk, Whatabob and Tennessee Twist and when he was beaten in handicaps he was probably over the top," said Old after Yahmi's narrow victory. The six-year-old is at last fulfilling his potential, but he may have had a bit of luck on his side. Adrian Maguire dismounted from Jack Tanner and revealed he was not firing on all cylinders. "I'm dying of the flu and might not ride tomorrow," he said. "I will talk to David Nicholson and see how I am in the morning."

Maguire still managed to win the first three races at Sandown and, flu or not, is flying compared to his great rival Tony McCoy. Bruised in a fall at Plumpton on Tuesday, the reigning champion was ruled out of action for the weekend after being stood down for concussion at Taunton yesterday. Riding Lixtasab in the West Hatch Novice Hurdle, McCoy came down at the final flight when in fifth place and was badly kicked by another runner in the melee. He lay motionless for a while but eventually walked away to be brought back in an ambulance. Course doctor Roger Lambert said: "McCoy will miss the next two days as the rules state that if the concussion is of a minor nature the jockey cannot ride for three days." McCoy did not have the strongest book of rides at Cheltenham today, but looked

Sport in brief

Bowlers speed India to series win over SA

INDIA lost no time in rounding off their first series victory over South Africa yesterday with a 380-run win in the deciding third Test in Kanpur, the medium-pace Javagal Srinath and the left-arm spinner Sunil Joshi combining to reduce the tourists, set 461 to win, from 127 for five overnight on 100 all out. The return three-test series starts in Durban on Boxing Day. Australia's Steve Waugh is fit again and replaces Stuart Law in the World Series one-day match against Pakistan in Adelaide on Sunday.

Third time lucky for Robidoux

ALAIN ROBIDOUX converted his third consecutive appearance in a world ranking quarter-final in a place in tomorrow's semi-finals of the German Open by beating the world No. 11 Dave Harold 5-4 at Osnabrück, writes Clive Everton. The Canadian No. 1 did well to recover from two mid-match setbacks. One failure at an easy red when 34 in front in the fourth frame and another when 65 ahead in the fifth led to Harold clearances of 35 and 74 respectively, Robidoux falling 3-2 behind. At 4-4 and 38-0, something similar loomed. "He potted a great long red," said Robidoux, "and he'd been scoring so heavily I thought I might not get another chance." Harold, however, snatched at a middle-pocket pink on 26 to let Robidoux in for the clinching 38 - which at least left Harold free to use his Stoke City season ticket for tomorrow's visit of Swindon Town.

Gerg leads a German one-two

HILDE GERG showed the field a clean pair of skis in winning yesterday's World Cup super-G at Val d'Isère. The only woman to go under 1min 50sec, she was nearly 0.1sec clear of her fellow German Katja Seizinger, the World Cup champion. The super-G world champion, Isolde Kostner of Italy, was third. An unnamed New Zealander has been banned for two years over the stimulant methamphetamine. The skier, not a member of the national team, tested positive at an International Skiing Federation series at Coronet Peak in August. The American downhill racer downhilled yesterday had surgery on the knee ligaments torn during practice for last weekend's Val World Cup events. She expects to be out for six months.

Subaru to keep McRae busy

THE 1995 world rally champion Colin McRae, along with Kenneth Eriksson and Piero Liatti, has been retained by Subaru for next season's expanded championship, with the Scot pencilled in to contest all 14 rounds of the series. The three were kept on after winning successive manufacturers' titles for the Japanese company. Eriksson, the Asia-Pacific champion, and Liatti will focus on gravel and asphalt surfaces.

Hall in form in Jakarta

ENGLAND'S Darren Hall continued his winning run in the qualifying round of the badminton World Cup Championship in Jakarta, following up his Group A victory over China's Chen Gang with a 15-12, 4-15, 15-10 win over Taiwan's Fung Pernadi.

Preen to the fore in China

CARL PREAN, the England table tennis No. 3, reached the World Professional Grand Prix quarter-finals in Tianjin, China by beating the German Stefan Fetzner 2-1, 21-13, 21-15 yesterday.

Doncaster runners and riders

Table with 2 columns: Race details and runner names. Includes races like 1.45 Crystal Spirit, 1.46 Eastern Magic, 1.47 Country Grub, 1.48 Country Grub, 1.49 Country Grub.

Cheltenham card with guide to the form

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Lingfield all-weather flat programme

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Synside market

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Soccer

Townsend stays, Little tells Celtic

Peter White

ASTON VILLA'S manager Brian Little will firmly reject an attempt by Celtic to sign his captain Andy Townsend.

Tommy Burns is anxious to sign Townsend and strengthen his midfield in an attempt to close the gap with the leaders Rangers in the Scottish Premier Division.

But Little has no intention of cashing in on Townsend, even though the 33-year-old player's contract expires next summer.

This is the second time in two weeks Burns has tried to buy a Villa player. First he proposed a part-exchange deal involving his Dutch striker Pierre van Hooydonk and another of Little's midfielders, Mark Draper.

Little rejected that deal, as he will Burns's approach for Townsend. Villa's manager said last night: "I don't want any of my players to leave. We are fifth in the Premier League and hoping to have a good run in the FA Cup. There is absolutely no point in changing things around just for the sake of it."

Instead, Little may soon attempt to add to his squad. Liverpool expect Villa to lodge a second offer for Stan Collymore before Christmas.

Birmingham City going public

Tony May

BIRMINGHAM City are the latest club to go public. Ambitions for promotion to the Premier League, they yesterday announced plans to raise \$5 million for stadium redevelopment and new players by floating shares on the Alternative Investment Market (AIM) in February.

Details of the deal have yet to be worked out but the value of the club is likely to be fixed at between \$20 million and \$25 million. City's revenue is said to have risen from \$7.8 million in 1993-94 to \$7.7 million for the 1994-95 season.

Control of the club will remain in the hands of Sport Newspapers, owned by David Sullivan and the brothers David and Ralph Gold. Sullivan holds 50 per cent of the club shares, the Gold brothers the other half. Tottenham Hotspur will still own between three-quarters and four-fifths of the stock.

"In four years of ownership we have built Birmingham City into a First Division club its supporters and Birmingham can be proud of," said Sullivan.

"We have invested over \$2 million in players and stadium redevelopment. We now feel it is in an ideal position for investors and shareholders alike to become shareholders and to work with us towards the future success of the club."

Karren Brady, the managing director, said: "Birmingham City FC has a regular following and its supporters are wide-ranging. Because of this we look forward to welcoming applications from local, regional and national businesses and individual supporters."

Several clubs are now seeking security through the City. In the past seven days Southampton and Sunderland have announced plans to go public. Sunderland, whose share issue goes on the market on Christmas Eve, values the club at \$47.7 million.

Southampton is the subject of a \$10 million takeover from a property-development and leisure company.

Liverpool beat Newcastle for rising Icelandic star

Ian Ross

LIVERPOOL are ready to continue with their policy of opening Anfield's doors to the Continent's most promising young talent by signing the rising star of Icelandic football Gudjonsson.

The 17-year-old striker arrived in Liverpool for talks yesterday morning, much to the annoyance of Newcastle, who had the teenager on trial for the previous 10 days.

Unfortunately for Newcastle, Gudjonsson is a lifelong Liverpool supporter and did not hesitate to walk out of St James' Park the moment he was informed of the Merseyside club's interest.

An established under-21 international, Gudjonsson plays for one of Iceland's leading clubs, Akranes, and is valued at about \$1.2 million. But if he joins Liverpool he can play no part in their Cup Winners' Cup campaign because he has already appeared in this season's competition.

Liverpool have just concluded negotiations with the Norwegian defender Bjorn Tore Kvarme, who is expected to complete a transfer from Rosenborg early next month.

Southampton celebrated yesterday after winning a six-year battle to build a \$35 million all-seater stadium just outside the city at Stmham.

The Saints, who this week announced they were to be floated on the Stock Exchange, will now begin fund-raising to finance the \$50,000-capacity arena, in which they hope to play by 2000.

Newcastle's winger Keith Gillespie, with groin trouble, has become the fifth player to pull out of Northern Ireland's squad for tomorrow's World Cup qualifier with Albania in Belfast. Bryan Hamilton had already called up the young Blackpool forward James Quinn as a precaution.

GM Vaushall, Conference champions will be given another three months to ensure their grounds meet the criteria for entry to the Football League. The deadline has been moved from New Year's Eve to April 1.

The League spokesman Chris Hull admitted that a judge's recommendation that League requirements be reviewed had influenced the change. The recommendation came in the unsuccessful High Court action brought against the League in the summer by last season's Conference champions, Stevenage Borough.

Aston Villa's goalkeeper Mark Bosnich will not be charged for his Nazi-style salute in October's match at Tottenham, Scotland yard said last night. The Australian was fined \$1,000 by the FA and severely censured for the gesture.

Leeds' manager George Graham yesterday side-stepped a row with Tony Yeboah, saying that the unhappy striker was not in the team simply because he was not fit enough.

The \$15,000-a-week Ghanaian had declared his discontent with life at Leeds and asked to be sold, claiming that two German clubs and Marseille were interested in him.

Yeboah, who has been out of the first team for eight months after knee surgery, has been an unused substitute in the past two games.

Graham said: "I'm not treating Tony's remarks too seriously. It's all down to frustration because he has been out for so long.

Everyone at the club is delighted Tony is nearly fit again. Of course we all want him back. But we don't want to take a chance with his fitness and risk another long spell on the sidelines. That is why I am quite surprised by his comments."

Michael Atherton, disturbed by the speculation about the seriousness of his back injury, pronounced it "not a cause for national concern".

"It can now be officially removed from the nation's list of obsessions, leaving the field clear for more pressing concerns such as the Christmas No.1 and the future of the pound."

Atherton scored his first half-century of the Zimbabwe tour yesterday, at the sixth attempt, as all England's front-line batsmen satisfyingly found form before Sunday's first one-day international.

Then, as the third day's play against Matabeleland here was abandoned shortly after tea because of a thunderstorm, he happily slashed two miles back to the team's hotel through the deluge.

Zimbabwe suffers one of the world's largest death tolls because of lightning, though it was a relief to discover that the storm had largely abated by the time he set off. Even in his improved state of health Atherton would struggle to adopt the "lightning position", which involves crouching on the floor and directing your bottom to the heavens; a week ago he could not even touch his knees.

Atherton batted in business-like manner for 2½ hours, ferreting the occasional ball down to third man with something approaching his old discrimination. His most ungainly moment brought about his dismissal as he tried to drag Vaghmaria's left-arm spin through midwicket and spooned a comfortable catch to mid-on.

"Inevitably Michael has been suffering a lot of stiffness and he will no doubt suffer more after this innings," said England's coach David Lloyd. "But he is 80 per cent fit and improving. And, as far as our general preparations are concerned, perfect: we are exactly where we wanted to be."

Graham Thorpe's half-century was equally welcome. He had looked equally out of form since arriving in Zimbabwe a week late because of the birth of his first child, Henry James. Now he became increasingly assertive and his two-hour 65 was the further turning of the screw by an England side whose confidence has blossomed in this mellow town of spacious streets and restful parks.

England batted for about two sessions before declaring at 230 for five, after Gough's sixth wicket — a mistimed pull by Olunga — had quickly wrapped up Matabeleland's first innings. Left 377 for victory, the home team resume this morning on five without loss.

England's second innings could hardly have progressed more satisfactorily. The only batsman to fall was Knight, who was leg-before playing back to Olunga, and even he had the benefit of his first-innings century behind him. Stewart bristled until he failed to hit Bagmaria over the top; Hussain played with dexterous command against the spinners until he was stumped off Andrew Whittall's off-spin.

Zimbabwe's most pressing concern is the fitness of their chief strike bowler Heath Streak, who did not bowl yesterday but gave the impression that there was not much to be alarmed about by spending all day in the field.

David Houghton, Zimbabwe's captain, classified Streak's injury as "a niggle" but others spoke darkly of a possible recurrence of the groin problem that caused him to miss Zimbabwe's tour of Pakistan. He dragged himself stiffly across the pavilion verandah to explain to a quorum of journalists that he was feeling perfectly okay, and that, even though it had been suggested that he was short of conditioning, he was satisfied that he had done enough bowling before the start of the Test series.

Streak's groin, like Atherton's back, has become a national obsession. Here, though, it does not vie with such issues of magnitude as the Christmas No.1 and the future of the pound so much as with the tobacco harvest and the price of blitton.



Putting his back into it... England's injury-troubled captain Michael Atherton strikes out at Vaghmaria, only to be caught by Whittall

STU FOSTER

Tour match: Matabeleland v England XI

Atherton suffers for his art

David Hopps in Bulawayo

ONLY a week has passed since Michael Atherton, disturbed by the speculation about the seriousness of his back injury, pronounced it "not a cause for national concern".

"It can now be officially removed from the nation's list of obsessions, leaving the field clear for more pressing concerns such as the Christmas No.1 and the future of the pound."

Atherton scored his first half-century of the Zimbabwe tour yesterday, at the sixth attempt, as all England's front-line batsmen satisfyingly found form before Sunday's first one-day international.

Then, as the third day's play against Matabeleland here was abandoned shortly after tea because of a thunderstorm, he happily slashed two miles back to the team's hotel through the deluge.

Zimbabwe suffers one of the world's largest death tolls because of lightning, though it was a relief to discover that the storm had largely abated by the time he set off. Even in his improved state of health Atherton would struggle to adopt the "lightning position", which involves crouching on the floor and directing your bottom to the heavens; a week ago he could not even touch his knees.

Atherton batted in business-like manner for 2½ hours, ferreting the occasional ball down to third man with something approaching his old discrimination. His most ungainly moment brought about his dismissal as he tried to drag Vaghmaria's left-arm spin through midwicket and spooned a comfortable catch to mid-on.

"Inevitably Michael has been suffering a lot of stiffness and he will no doubt suffer more after this innings," said England's coach David Lloyd.

"But he is 80 per cent fit and improving. And, as far as our general preparations are concerned, perfect: we are exactly where we wanted to be."

Graham Thorpe's half-century was equally welcome. He had looked equally out of form since arriving in Zimbabwe a week late because of the birth of his first child, Henry James.

Now he became increasingly assertive and his two-hour 65 was the further turning of the screw by an England side whose confidence has blossomed in this mellow town of spacious streets and restful parks.

England batted for about two sessions before declaring at 230 for five, after Gough's sixth wicket — a mistimed pull by Olunga — had quickly wrapped up Matabeleland's first innings.

Left 377 for victory, the home team resume this morning on five without loss. England's second innings could hardly have progressed more satisfactorily.

The only batsman to fall was Knight, who was leg-before playing back to Olunga, and even he had the benefit of his first-innings century behind him.

Stewart bristled until he failed to hit Bagmaria over the top; Hussain played with dexterous command against the spinners until he was stumped off Andrew Whittall's off-spin.

Zimbabwe's most pressing concern is the fitness of their chief strike bowler Heath Streak, who did not bowl yesterday but gave the impression that there was not much to be alarmed about by spending all day in the field.

David Houghton, Zimbabwe's captain, classified Streak's injury as "a niggle" but others spoke darkly of a possible recurrence of the groin problem that caused him to miss Zimbabwe's tour of Pakistan.

He dragged himself stiffly across the pavilion verandah to explain to a quorum of journalists that he was feeling perfectly okay, and that, even though it had been suggested that he was short of conditioning, he was satisfied that he had done enough bowling before the start of the Test series.

Streak's groin, like Atherton's back, has become a national obsession. Here, though, it does not vie with such issues of magnitude as the Christmas No.1 and the future of the pound so much as with the tobacco harvest and the price of blitton.

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Scoreboard

Table showing cricket scores for England XI First Innings and Matabeleland First Innings.

Table showing cricket scores for England XI Second Innings and Matabeleland Second Innings.

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Two-year limit agreed for overseas players

Mike Selvey

THE presence of overseas players — habitués in first-class cricket for three decades — is to be maintained even though two years ago the counties agreed a moratorium that would have precluded the signing of foreigners beyond the 1998 season.

At the Test and County Cricket Board's winter meeting yesterday it was decided to lift the moratorium provided no player was offered more than a two-year contract.

The moratorium was agreed originally because it was felt that cricket in England might be affected by the long-term signing of international players who were required by their countries in the summer.

The 1999 season was chosen for the original ban largely because it coincided with the next World Cup in England during which the top players would be preoccupied anyway.

It would have provided a convenient breathing space between those who would see a total ban on imports and those who wished for the status quo. An extension into 2000 had also been mooted.

Now, however, it is felt that the most sensible action is to allow signings for a maximum of two years so that any future decisions about overseas players can be made within a reasonable timeframe without contractual difficulties.

It was also agreed by the TCBC that any county resting players at the specific request of the chairman of the England selectors shall receive compensation at the rate of \$500 per match day.

Instances are rare but last season Graeme Hick, Mike Atherton, Dominic Cork and Darren Gough missed matches at the behest of Raymond and Colin Jones.

A Somerset's Philip Frost has been chosen as the TCBC's Groundsman of the Year, with Derbyshire's Steve Birks runner-up.

Paul Fitzpatrick, chief executive of the Football Association, has announced that he will step down as chairman in October.

The FA has announced that it will be available for Leeds' match against Halifax Blue Sox on Boxing Day.

Wigan Warriors are hoping to lure back their missing coach by offering season ticket buyers the chance of a trip down under in June when the club play in the World Club Championship.

As well as being allowed to pay for their tickets in instalments, they will have their names entered in a draw with the trip to Australia as the prize.

Wigan's average attendance fell below those of Bradford and St Helens last season, the first time for a decade that they did not draw the game's biggest average crowds.

Tour match: Queensland v England A

Andy Wilson in Brisbane

MARK GATTING made it clear here yesterday that if he were to be an England selector he would not want to be so "half-cock".

Responding to speculation linking him with the job on the assumption that Graham Gooch becomes chairman, Gattling said: "I don't know if it would be possible to do the job properly while still playing."

"You would have to ask Graham how much it affected his cricket. It didn't look like it affected him too much last year but you have to be careful not to end up with too much on your plate."

Gattling, who is planning two more seasons as a player — the second possibly as Middlesex player-coach — also urged the Test and County Cricket Board to allow Owais Shah a full season with the county rather than interrupting it by making him play for England Under-19.

The youth internationals have always been a precedent in the past but the 19-year-old is the first player to have made an A tour while still eligible for the under-19s.

Only 85 meaningless minutes were possible at the Gabba because of a storm at the start of the day and bad light at the end.

Jason Gallian bowled for the first time in his injury-hit tour and sent down 10 Leyland overs for 17 runs, and his Lancashire team-mate Glen Chappell took the one wicket to fall, having Jerry Cansell caught before trying to avoid a short ball.

As Chappell continued to dig the ball in at the left-hander Matthew Mott, the visitors' captain Adam Hollace revived a leg-theory field 60-odd yards on.

England As First Innings 230 (M A Boucher 76, Crawley 67) MATABELELAND First Innings (overnight: 154-4)

MATABELELAND Second Innings (overnight: 181-6)

ENGLAND XI First Innings 334 (N V Knight 114, J P Crawley 63) MATABELELAND First Innings (overnight: 181-6)

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Getting proves selective

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Rowing

Christopher Dodd

CAMBRIDGE named an interim crew Gullt and Ian Innocence but hiscoxes showed anything but naivete yesterday in a fine tussle from Putney to Mortlake won in a very fast 16min 15sec.

The verdict went to Gullt, steered by the British Olympic women's eight cox Suzie Ellis, by a length and two-thirds. On the Middlesex station she got the better of this year's Blue boat cox Kevin Whymann, constantly trying to bore him off the tide and unsettling his crew more than her own by "knitting" blades for most of the way to Duke's Meadows.

Gullt's No. 7 Christian Erni frequently outched blades with Innocence's No. 3 Paul Cunningham.

In a tide stronger than for Oxford on Monday, Gullt's was a clean crew with a stern four including the freshman Alex Story from Britain's Atlanta eight and three of 1996's outstanding Goldie crew.

The other crew, stroked by the Canadian Olympian Brad Crombie and containing the president Ethan Ayer, the only Blue, is probably faster in flat water.

Leeds sign Mathiou

Paul Fitzpatrick

JAMIE MATHIOU became Leeds Rhinos' fourth major signing of the week, and their sixth since Gary Hetherington became chief executive in October, when he joined from North Queensland Cowboys.

The 6ft 1in, 16½-stone prop represented Australian Schoolboys and was formerly with North Sydney Bears. His will be available for Leeds' match against Halifax Blue Sox on Boxing Day.

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Monarchs relocate to Stamford Bridge

Chelse

CHELSEA FC are to host World League matches from next April after agreeing a two-year deal with the London Monarchs, who have played at White Hart Lane. Tottenham's ground, for the past two seasons.

The Monarchs staged the final game of their 1996 World League campaign at Stamford Bridge and attracted more than 11,000 fans to see them defeat Rhein Fire 17-14. London's 1997 season starts on April 13 against the Frankfurt Galaxy.

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Ski Hotline advertisement with contact information and a small image of a skier.

Handwritten Arabic text at the bottom of the page.

THE COMEBACK TRAIL

Christie, Mansell, Leonard, Andries... Guardian writers on the men who simply cannot turn their backs on the sports that have been their life

Champions who refuse to say goodbye

Christie set to run in France

Duncan Mackay in Monte Carlo

LONDON CHRISTIE is planning to make an international comeback only two months short of his 37th birthday, on the track where he set his only world record.

world indoor record for 200m on the famously fast track, running 20.26sec — a time finally beaten this year when his training partner Frankie Fredericks became the first man to cover the distance indoors in under 20sec.



Christie... February date

If Christie, one of the best-paid athletes on the summer circuit — commanding up to \$50,000 (£30,000) a meeting — decides to race on, he could benefit from a new system of prize-money at next summer's Grand Prix and world championships, where more than \$20 million will be up for grabs, according to a senior International Amateur Athletic Federation source.

Mansell missing the Moët buzz

Frank Keating in Barcelona

READ all about it: Nigel Mansell is back on the grand prix starting grid at the age of 43. Is this, like old boy, one asked him here yesterday?

But is it reasonable to tut-tut and fear for a self-obsessed nut's future in a dangerous, young man's game when a far more famed sporting legend is preparing a comeback in the cruel, sometimes deadly, boxing ring?

rounder against Thomas Hearns. Afterwards, his hands still shaking as he fingered the glasses hiding cuts around his eyes, he pledged to retire on the spot. His son of three or four was on his knee. The boy is now old enough to be at university but his dad fights on.

It is not, nor is it with Mansell, anything to do with money. Both men are worth many fortunes. With both it must be that psychotic inability to purge themselves of the roar of the limelight, the smell of the crowd, the lust for simple, but priceless, all-time fame.

In Mansell's case it might be understandable that his sport is not out of his system. He is older than Leonard but the boxer had been 10 years a global name when Mansell was still a back-marker journeyman and a bit of a joke with the Martin people of his circuit for his Brummie accent.

dries, will be looking for tomorrow night. We are told he is "somewhere between 43 and 48" and he is seeking to regain a British title 17 years after he first fought for one. He needs the money, and the man from the Inland Revenue will be metaphorically in his corner.

Good luck to him; his is a very different kettle of clobber and commitment than that of Mansell, who plays golf with his tax inspectors and his gleeful accountants. And on his own golf course in Devon, built with his own £10 million crispies.

But to play golf on your own course and then toast yourself with half of bitter at the 19th is not quite the same thing; better to mess about with the Moët on the podium and hear the acclaim of the world.

Mansell has spent 18 months away from his magic roundabout of fame and autograph-signing. Just playing golf. In that time he has reduced his handicap from five to one. But only his kids — and his accountants — watched him doing it. Not quite the same as being serenaded at Silverstone.

At the present rate he will be down to scratch by February. What else for a life? Eureka! Of course! The first 1997 grand prix starts in Melbourne on March 9. Fangio won his last world championship at 46, didn't he? Why can't Mansell? That would show them.

He was pumped up yesterday. The previous day he had jumped, cold, into the car yet had shown the young German, latest of the Schumacher dynasty, a thing or two. And had not this been the very track, only five summers ago, where Ayrton Senna had publicly decided Mansell as "a contemptible



Mansell... Just for fame

shit" before the Englishman had gone out and beaten the Brazilian in a dramatic, nerve-testing head-to-head? Senna has gone so the world needs another genuine superstar. And Leonard doubtless feels precisely the same as Mansell.

'There will be no pressure from us' says Jordan

AFTER Nigel Mansell ended his test with Jordan-Peugeot yesterday looking increasingly likely to race next season, the team owner Eddie Jordan said: "I believe he sees himself as the best British driver."

lean and fit he looked but the decision has to come from Nigel. There will be no pressure from Jordan."

think the taste for racing ever went away," he said. "It's the closest thing to the edge of life you can get."

Rugby Union

Fast and loose Sheasby seizes the day

Robert Armstrong meets the Wasp making England's back row buzz

A WEEKEND of mammoth celebrations followed Chris Sheasby's second international, against the New Zealand Barbarians, on the same day as his 30th birthday. A swarm of Wasps descended on the Sporting Page in west London and carried on reveling at the Gargyle into the small hours before the England No. 8 finally broke away with a dozen or so friends to enjoy a Sunday roast with his parents at Windsor.

It was fitting that Sheasby, a man who has made a name for himself in the world of rugby, should promptly set aside a 34-19 defeat to focus on 24 hours of fun and laughter. The power of positive thinking not only kept him going forward during the long years of international neglect, but enabled the former Harlequin to seize the day and blow away England's back-row cobwebs the moment he got his

work. It wasn't that I didn't want to do it, I just wasn't working hard enough around the fringes in the northern hemisphere style. As the laws have changed I have tightened up my game and aimed for a complete 80-minute effort."

Sheasby had no trouble coping with the fast rucking and continuous movement of the New Zealanders, whose coach John Hart commended the open-side qualities of the Englishman's game. It remains to be seen whether Rowell will rejig the back row as Hart suggested, perhaps switching Dallaglio to his preferred position at blind-side and Rodber to No. 8.

"I was pumped up for the New Zealand game because I knew I could compete against their style," said Sheasby. "It was wonderful to score in my first international against Italy but New Zealand was a very different test. I was asking myself, 'Am I good enough to survive an international season playing right at the top?'"

"That challenge made me feel very snappy and I made one or two things happen in the first five minutes. I felt comfortable with the game though I was disappointed we let it slip away in the last 10 minutes after really taking it to them and playing some great rugby. Still, it was a positive experience."

"I haven't found it difficult to settle into the side. I have the respect of the other players partly due to my experience. I enjoy the camaraderie and want to justify my place on the field."

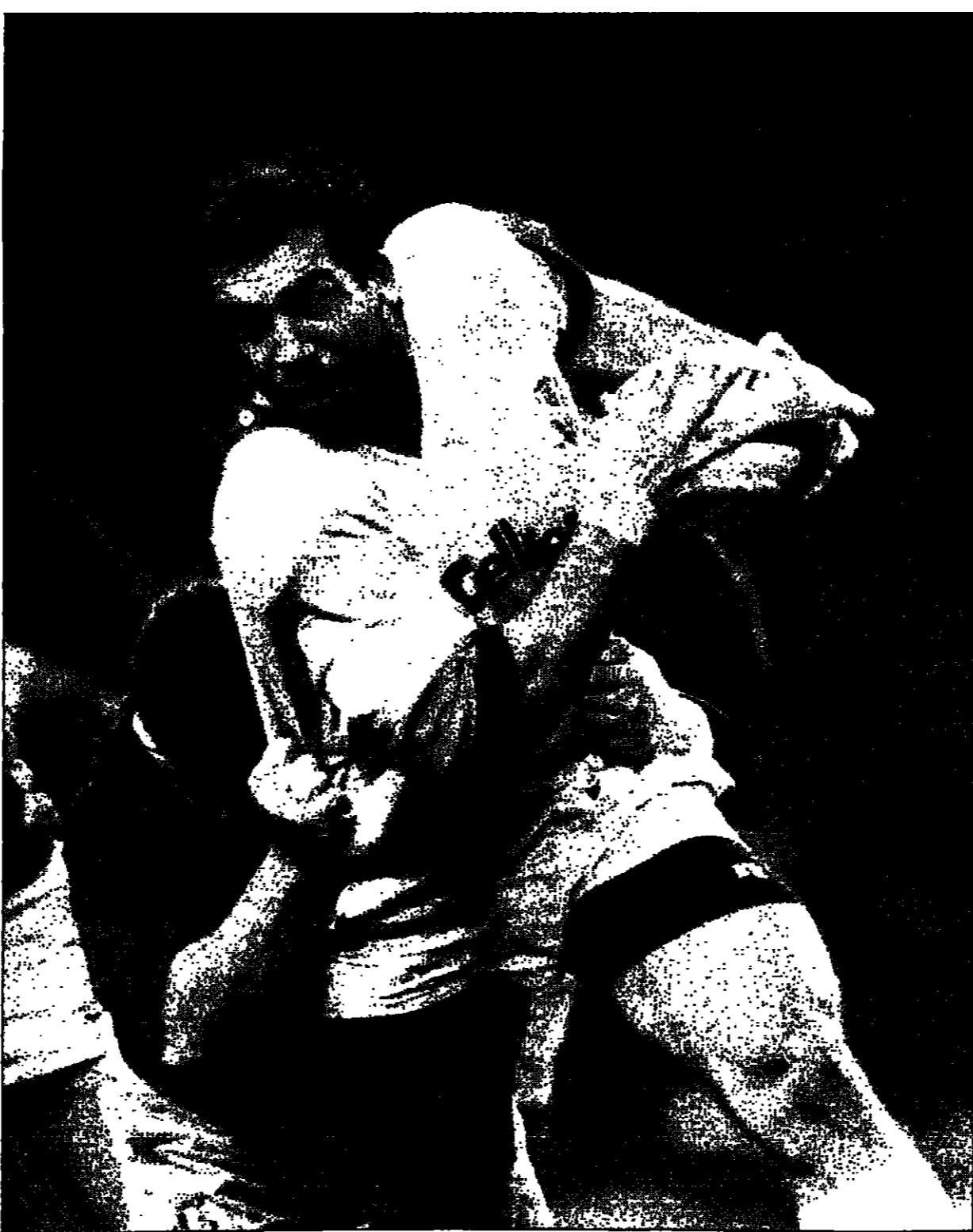
A committed sportaholic since his school days, Sheasby has always been conscious that his speed, strength and athleticism are rare gifts he must not squander. He is a bit unusual among England forwards in that he appears to value sevens almost as highly as the 15-man game, an outlook hastened by his break with Harlequins last spring after a row with the club's director of rugby Dick Best.

"It has been very important to me to win the World Cup Sevens [in 1993] with England," he said. "That is the only trophy England has won on a world stage and we beat the best, New Zealand, South Africa and Australia. In the modern era you can become a far more positive influence by taking sevens skills into the 15-man game."

"Since I was eight years old I've wanted to play for England. As a teenager I stood in the West car park at the Varsity Match looking up at Billy Beaumont, Roger Utley and Mike Stemen and wondering whether I'd ever play as well as they did."

"You have to set yourself targets. First you must gain your first cap and make sure it's not your only one. Then, once you've played against the best, you get a taste for that experience that you want to have over and over again."

"I am grasping this opportunity with both hands. The next thing is to play in the Five Nations and after that the British Lions tour [of South Africa]. Still, you can only take one step at a time. If I play well against Argentina [tomorrow], other opportunities could flow from that."



Sevens cavalry charge... Chris Sheasby, whose running and handling skills fit Jack Rowell's game plan TOM JENKINS

Stransky signing a Leicester coup

JOEL STRANSKY, the South African fly-half who scored all 15 of the victorious Springboks' victories in last year's World Cup final, is joining Leicester, writes Robert Armstrong.

The 29-year-old former Natal and Western Province player has agreed a 2½-year contract which could be worth up to £250,000 with bonuses included. He has played in 23 Tests, scoring 240 points, and will play a key role in the development of the flexible running style fostered by Welford Road's Australian director of rugby Bob Dwyer.

South African international to play for Leicester, whom he watched defeat Northampton 23-9 in a league match last Sunday.

He is expected to obtain a work permit within a month and make his Courage league debut on January 11, but he would not be eligible for the European Cup final on January 25 should the Tigers reach that stage by winning their semi-final against Toulouse on January 4.

"I was impressed by every aspect of the club on and off the field," he said. "They're a strong side, getting stronger, and they're going to achieve great things. They haven't lost

sight of the fact that they're a rugby club, and, speaking as a recent father, the environment and family atmosphere at Welford Road was very persuasive."

"This is another step towards our building the strongest club team in Europe," said Dwyer. "Joel will bring his own unparalleled playing strengths to the team, and we're also counting on his experience and influence to develop the terrific young fly-half skill we already have at the club."

Nottingham are making strenuous efforts to get away from the foot of the League Two table. Earlier this week they recruited

Welsh refs to down whistles

David Plummer on the pay dispute set to stop play by Christmas

REFEREES in Wales will next week become the first group of sporting officials in Britain to go on strike in a pay dispute, unless the Welsh Rugby Union steps in to prevent a downing of whistles which would paralyse the game in the principality.

Feelings are running so high over the WRU's refusal to sanction match fees beyond the top two divisions that the backdate the claim to August 31 that when the Welsh Referees' Society met to consider a strike call, only one district out of nine voted to accept the union's package.

The strike is scheduled to start a week tomorrow and would wreck the First Division programme and the fifth round of the Swalec Cup as well as district schools and youth rugby. The society's chairman, Les Peard, himself a former international referee, warned: "This is no idle threat. Unless the WRU meets our demands we are going on an indefinite strike, and the mood of the referees is one of anger. We feel let down."

The referees sought a sliding scale of payments from Divisions One to Five: £125 for taking charge of a match in the top flight, with reduced fees for the touch judges, down to £25 for controlling a Fifth Division game. The union of

ferred £150 for First Division matches, £75 for Second and nothing for the rest. It offered to backdate the package to December 1 but told the referees they would all have to sign contracts with the WRU.

"We have told them there is no way anyone will be signing contracts," said Peard. "Half our members are not allowed to anyway, because of their jobs, but we regard it as a sinister move."

"It would only cost them £28,000 to backdate the claim to August 31 and they are spending money here, there and everywhere on other things. Referees in England get £200 for taking charge of a First Division match. We are not being unreasonable; the game is now an open one and, with all the pressure on referees, it is time our contribution was recognised. The ball is in the WRU's court, because we will not be watering down our demands."

He said that any referee who wanted to take charge of a match next week was free to do so. "We are an amateur organisation. We are not stopping anyone from refereeing."

The referees threatened to strike earlier this year in a row over expenses but the WRU caved in at the last moment. There is no sign of a climbdown this time.

"I hope this strike is averted, but I am confident," said Ken Rowlands, the WRU's director of referees. "I am caught in the middle. We know the strike threat is a real one and not an empty gesture. I do not think the problem is the money involved but the principle."

The official rate table listing fees for various sports including Rugby Union, Rugby League, Soccer, Ice hockey, Basketball, and Tennis.

# SportsGuardian

## RUGBY UNION

Injuries have forced Jack Rowell's hand. **Robert Armstrong** on significant changes for tomorrow's match against Argentina

# Leonard captains England

ENGLAND'S escalating injury toll has forced a major reshuffle, including a temporary change of captain, for tomorrow's international against Argentina at Twickenham.

Jason Leonard leads the side in place of Phil de Glanville, who has withdrawn with a thigh injury but should have ample time to recover before the Calcutta Cup match against Scotland at Twickenham on February 1.

Doubts persist about the fitness of Mike Catt, who has a chest injury, and Alex King might win his first cap should the England fly-half withdraw. Northampton's Paul Grayson, who won five caps last season, has also been placed on stand-by, bringing the number of players attached to the England squad to 24 since the start of the week.

Leonard is the first prop to lead England since Fran Cotton, and may well be the first carpenter to do so. The 28-year-old Harlequin forward has 50 caps and last month was named vice-captain by the coach Jack Rowell.

"Everyone dreams about becoming England captain one day," said Leonard. "It's a wonderful honour. My approach to the job will be calm and collected. We have experienced players who won't need anything more than a quiet word in their ear from me."

Rowell noted that Leonard had been closely involved in the discussion of playing issues along with de Glanville since the Bath player's appointment five weeks ago.



Warm work on a cold day... Paul Grayson leads the chase as the England squad train at Twickenham yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID ROGERS

"I have never found Jason's opinions anything other than valuable," said Rowell. "He has made a lot of progress improving his fitness, he is captain of Harlequins, a big club, and as England vice-captain he was next in line."

Predictably the coach side-stepped the question of whether he would retain the old firm of Carling and Guscott in the new year if they sufficiently impressed in their 44th international together.

"Will has done immeasurably well as a player after eight years as captain and Jerry now has a chance to show off his wares," he said. Underwood, who has scored 10 tries in 20 internationals, will be relieved to return to

the Test arena and finally put behind him his embarrassing World Cup performance against New Zealand 18 months ago. Indeed, England's back division arguably will be strengthened by the out-and-out pace of Underwood and Sleighbolton on the wings and the restoration of the nation's most successful midfield partnership.

Leonard predicted that the Argentina game would be a hard, physical confrontation. "Their forwards may not possess the technical expertise of New Zealand but they definitely do have brute strength and raw aggression. I don't think any player wearing an Argentina shirt will want to be on the end of a 50-point defeat again [as in 1991]."

# PBH, master of straight-batted GBH



Vincent Hanna

FEW are the sportsmen who can be recalled simply by their initials or nicknames. Like All or The Don, or WG. Peter May, or PBH as he was universally known, died three years ago and a new book about him comes out next week.

May was the model for every schoolboy-comic hero of his time. Tall, well-bred, white and English, with carefully ironed hair and a glorious on-drive, he was just the sort of chap one hoped one's daughter would bring home. There's a picture of a May on drive in the book that alone is almost worth the price.

I saw him play his last Test match, at The Oval in 1961, when he made 71 against Australia. In all he scored 27,592 first-class runs in 618 innings, an average of 51, and he retired at 32. He was a Charterhouse and Cambridge amateur of the old school, who knew which gate at Lord's to walk through and was, on everyone's say-so, a shy, modest man.

Mike Selvey recalls that when Neil Fairbrother got a duck in his first Test in 1967 somebody misinformed the hacks that PBH had done the same. "Next morning we were greeted by the chairman, who shuffled apologetically and said: 'I thought I played rather well in my first Test. I got 138.'"

May played with a straight bat. "Make sure the bowlers can see the maker's name," he said. He was very strong off the back foot and he rarely hooked. "It was a waste of time bowling bumpers at Peter," said Ray Lindwall. "He just ignored them." It makes one wonder how May, with that high backlift, would have fared against the later West Indies attacks. I expect he would have adapted.

From 1982 to 1989 he was chairman of the selectors, in which capacity he was widely criticised. He certainly got through a lot of captains: Keith Fletcher, Mike Gatting, Bob Willis, John Emburey, Chris Cowdrey—and in 1986 he removed David Gower in what is still regarded as a shabby fashion. Hill's book quotes Colin Cowdrey explaining that PBH was upset by

Gower's casual approach: "In his playing days Peter would always prepare notes on the jobs he had to do." If only David had remembered to carry a jobber with him. Not that the book contains many such insights. Of its sparse 178 pages only one and a half cover PBH's eight years as chairman of selectors. Hill plays down May's attitude to South Africa under apartheid, which led to strained relations with David Sheppard and Ranjan Subba Row (then chairman of the TCCB).

A mercifully short collection of clichés is used in the defence of the indefensible. We hear PBH arguing that isolating South Africa would be "hurting the very people who we profess to help", adding: "I have not enjoyed seeing good men and good friends treated with contempt by critics often woefully ignorant of the facts."

Sheppard vainly sought to repair their friendship. "Peter could be very unyielding in certain circumstances," he said. All the sadder when the circumstances were about standing up to wickedness.

But at least, in what is an anodyne piece of hagiography, Hill brings back one of my best schoolboy memories, the 1967 Test against West Indies at Edgbaston.

Their leg-spinner Sonny Ramadhin mesmerised England in the first innings, taking seven for 49. "We decided to have a dart at him," recalls Cowdrey, "as a result of which we were all out for 108 by twenty minutes to four."

WHEN England batted again, West Indies had built a first-innings lead of 288 runs. It was just before noon on the Monday that May and Cowdrey came together. England were then 115 for three and the team had checked out of their hotel.

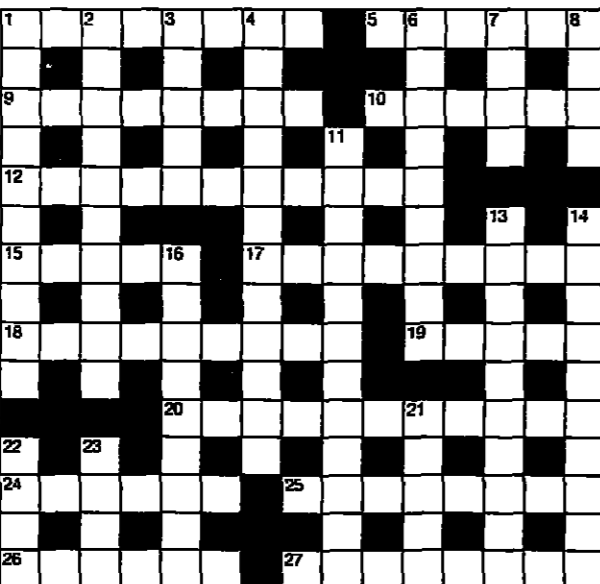
May's technique against Ramadhin was simple but effective: thrust the left leg down the wicket and play every ball as an off-break. Under modern laws the match would have finished quickly, but West Indian threats became hoarse from appealing as ball hit pad all day. May and Cowdrey put on 111, still the highest-ever England partnership. PBH was 285 not out.

"I've just seen history made," I scribbled in my school jotter, having watched all this on television. "I wish it had been Denis Compton." Denis was my real hero, but he was just as unreliable about South Africa.

\* Peter May, by Alan Hill, Andre Deutsch, £15.99

## Guardian Crossword No 20,835

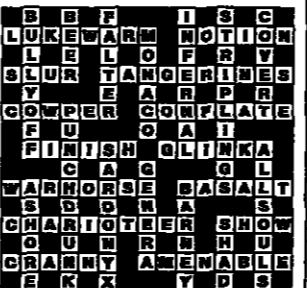
Set by Plodge



- 19 Last man to follow girl running into the Solway Firth (5)
- 20 In a manner of speaking, danced reel in a state of abandonment (11)
- 24 By what means held back a high seat in India? (6)
- 25 A pitted bowl? (8)
- 26 Superior courage of Pearl in the 5 (6)
- 27 Tyrants' employers take cut from surpluses (6)

### Down

- 1 Castle affecting the order of perpetual motion (4,6)
- 2 Elevating play on words about doings in central colony for the gearless (6,4)
- 3 Do you see the bit of Asia Minor that comes to a point? (5)
- 4 Spectacle of one of the 5 to turn lime tree rotten (3,2,7)
- 6 Gold trail abandoned in South American country (9)
- 7 Licenses no looking-glass on Sundays, we hear (4)
- 8 One of "The Bostonians"? Pull the other one! (4)
- 17 Democrat deserted supporter for a way to cover a seat (9)
- 18 Amounting to a Frenchman returning the call without honour (9)
- 16 Haggard heroine left Plymouth bowler with a duck (9)
- 21 It's apparent: Rover did bite the Frenchman (5)
- 22 Familiar fathead failed final. Philip... (4)
- 23 ... but draws up to be teacher's pet (4)



### CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,834

- 16 Haggard heroine left Plymouth bowler with a duck (9)
- 21 It's apparent: Rover did bite the Frenchman (5)
- 22 Familiar fathead failed final. Philip... (4)
- 23 ... but draws up to be teacher's pet (4)

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Leonard... battle-promotion

## FA seeks National Lottery hand-out to fund World Cup bid

THE Football Association is to seek National Lottery funding to help its campaign to bring the 2006 World Cup to England.

It has been estimated that staging the tournament would cost £300 million, double the total for Euro 96. At least £10 million would be

required over the next 3 1/2 years simply to mount a bid.

Alec McGivern, director of the FA's World Cup Campaign, led a Lancaster Gate delegation that met the sports minister Iain Sprouat and government officials yesterday. That followed last month's Downing Street meeting at

which the Prime Minister met England's coach Glenn Hoddle.

"Any bid for the World Cup could cost us £7-10 million by the time the decision is made by Fifa in 2000, and we thought it was right to tell the government that we were hoping for a contribution

from Lottery funds," said McGivern.

"The mood of the meeting was very positive. The government's attitude was that they are here to help and want to help us find a way around any problems."

More soccer, page 14

ALS & STORAGE TAKEAWAYS CONSERVATORIES PUBS ACCOUNTANTS CAR BREAKDOWN RECOVERY CARPET SHOPS ESTATE AGENTS GARAGE SERVICES FLORISTS

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